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FAREWELL TO FIESTAS AND SAINTS?
CHANGING CATHOLIC PRACTICES IN
CONTEMPORARY RURAL OAXACA

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ABSTRACT
This article* discusses recent changes in Catholic festivities, especially the system of fiestas in rural Mexico. The ethnographic focus of the discussion is on indigenous Zapotec communities of the State of Oaxaca. Collective religious practices in Mexican villages contribute to social cohesion. Fiestas commemorating patron saints of the villages play a particularly important role in (re)constructing communal identity and the feeling of collective belongingness. Various global processes like secularisation, integration of local economies into the capitalist market system, increasing out-migration from villages, and the rise of Protestantism have undermined the position of the Catholic Church in the region. The article scrutinises the changing organisation and role of fiestas in the communities, concluding that the impact of secularisation, migration and Protestantism in particular is not simple and always negative – these changes can actually invigorate certain dimensions of the fiestas.

KEYWORDS: fiesta • patron saint • folk Catholicism • Mexico • Oaxaca

INTRODUCTION

When I first arrived in Capulálpam, a Zapotec community that since 1998 has served as the base of my research in the State of Oaxaca in Southern Mexico, nearly everyone in the village was making preparations for the fiesta to commemorate Saint Matthew. Every 21 September, the “capulines”, as the villagers sometimes refer to themselves, celebrate the day of the patron saint of their village. The festivities that last for three days are a time of heightened religious fervour and social activities. The fiesta is a cathartic event in village life that is joyous and solemn at the same time.

Orlando’s family, with whom I initially stayed, was preparing for the reception of the so-called “procession of the drunkards” (la calenda de los borrachos) that was to pass by their house that night. In this procession, hundreds of people, led by the village

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brass-band, move from household to household, dancing, drinking and socialising. Households receiving the crowd had been pre-selected from a large pool of applicants who considered it an honour and their religious duty to serve food and drinks for free to such a large number of people. Preparations for the reception were an enormous task and Orlando’s family had invited their relatives to “do the guelaguetza”, or offer their cooperation, as it is called in the local idiom. Men were constructing a stage for the brass-band and arranging tables for food, women were preparing mole and making tortillas. Meanwhile they were discussing the route of the calenda that was to start moving from in front of the Catholic Church at sunset. Some of the women were planning to join the procession after it had passed Orlando’s house at around midnight. Laritza, one of Orlando’s numerous sisters, did not contribute much to this conversation and seemed to be feeling rather uncomfortable about the topic. When I asked whether she was also planning to go with the crowd, she hastily replied, “Oh no, I don’t like the fiesta, I am not a Catholic”. Being a Seventh Day Adventist, Laritza like most other non-Catholics considered the veneration of saints a despicable idolatry. She did come to help her relatives on such festive occasions, although this often meant a bitter compromise between the loyalty to her family and her own religious convictions.

This article scrutinises the role of Catholic festivities, the fiesta of the patron saint in particular, in the changing social and religious landscape of rural Mexico. The ethnographic focus of the discussion is on indigenous Zapotec communities of the Sierra Juárez, a mountainous northern region in the State of Oaxaca, where I have done fieldwork for longer and shorter periods for over ten years, but the analysis could easily be extrapolated to most of rural Mexico. In the majority of Mexican villages, religion has played an important role in the creation of a collective communal identity. Folk Catholicism, religious ceremonies and especially the fiestas to commemorate the patron saint of the village constitute not just a moral but also a social “glue”. Fiestas bring people together and contribute to the production and reproduction of community as a “collective self”. However, owing to various forces of globalisation, most importantly secularisation, integration of local traditional economies into the capitalist market system, and out-migration from villages, as well as the success of Protestant Churches, the role and the meaning of the Catholic Church and Catholic religious practices have recently been changing. This is characteristic not only of Oaxaca or Mexico but most of Latin America. Allegedly, these processes have a devastating impact on the system of rural religious fiestas. In the discussion that follows I will critically map some of the impact that these processes have had on Catholic fiestas in the Zapotec villages. I will conclude, however, that although the impact of secularisation, socioeconomic changes, migration and the rise of Protestantism on folk Catholicism and Catholic practices cannot be denied, the influence is not as straightforward and simple as often thought.

RURAL OAXACA AND COLLECTIVE CATHOLIC PRACTICES

With sixteen ethnic groups and an indigenous population that amounts to approximately 50 per cent of the total population of its roughly three million inhabitants, Oaxaca is the most indigenous Mexican state. Together with the neighbouring Chiapas it is also one of the poorest states in the country. The population of the Sierra Juárez, the re-
region where I have mostly worked, is predominantly indigenous Zapotec or Chinantec. Most communities in the area are fairly small by Mexican standards, with a population between 500 and 2,000 inhabitants. All villages are socio-politically organised on the basis of customary law. The body of indigenous norms and practices is locally referred to as *usos y costumbres*, the most important aspects of which are the cargo system and religious fiestas. The system of cargos refers to a hierarchy of communal responsibilities and positions that all men have to fulfil as members of the community. The cargos can be both civil and religious, they are generally obligatory and non-remunerated – individuals are nominated for these positions that last for 1–3 years by village authorities or the communal assembly. The decline of traditional economic activities, the increasing role of the money economy, social stratification and unemployment are characteristic to many villages in the area. Catholicism is the dominant religion in most communities, although like in the rest of Oaxaca, the region has recently experienced a considerable increase in Protestant population.

![Map of Oaxaca](image)

According to the last general census held in Mexico in 2000, Catholics make up 84.6 per cent of the total population of Oaxaca (INEGI 2005: 153). This is considerably less than in the traditional Catholic strongholds of Mexico like Guanajuato (96.4), Jalisco (95.4) or Aguascalientes (95.4).² The reasons for such differences between states are rooted in the spread of Catholicism during the colonial era. Owing to the high percentage of indigenous population, a multitude of different indigenous groups and native religious ideologies, Catholicism in colonial Oaxaca could never develop into a monolithic and
homogenous phenomenon. Dominicans, the main Catholic missionaries in Oaxaca during the first decades of the colonial era, were few and the Christianisation process was often superficial (Whitecotton 1985: 235). The relative weakness of Catholicism in Oaxaca might also explain why the “Cristero Rebellion”\(^3\) there took place on a much smaller scale than in most other states (Olivera Sedano 1966: 253), and why Oaxacan Protestant churches have been growing relatively rapidly.

Catholic practices at the communal level in Oaxaca are nevertheless multiple. The following description of collective Catholic events in Capulálpam should illustrate the ceremonial activity of folk Catholicism in the villages of the Sierra Juárez. The description is based on my experience of nearly two years of continuous fieldwork in the village in 1998–2000 but it is by no means exhaustive. I have singled out only the most populous events that engage the whole Catholic community and could be interpreted, along the lines of functionalistic approach to rituals, as a source of social integration. In reality different suburbs (barrios) and even individual households organise plenty of other festivities of religious (Catholic) nature.

The first significant yearly celebration in Capulálpam takes place on the very first day of the year, when a procession in which hundreds of people participate, takes the effigy of the Jesus-child from the local church to the house of its madrina, as she is called. Such patrons are pre-selected each year from a pool of candidates. The effigy stays in the madrina’s house till 2 February and during this period the house is regularly visited by other Catholics. On 2 February another procession returns the effigy to the church. During both rituals, food and drinks are served to all participants, the village brass-band plays and the ritual culminates in a mass held in the local church. Between these two occasions, on 6 January, the Catholic community also celebrates Epiphany (Día de los Reyes).

Starting on Ash Wednesday and lasting throughout the Lent, morning prayers are held and the whole village is woken up daily at 5:30 with religious music and an invitation to prayer through the loud-speakers on top of the Catholic Church in the middle of the village. The fourth Friday of the Lent – the “Day of the Samaritans” (Los Samaritanos) – is celebrated with a procession through the village. The Easter Week (Semana Santa) celebrations in Capulálpam start on Palm Sunday (Domingo de Ramos), and comprise many populous social and religious activities. Central to these is the dramatic re-enactment of the last days of Jesus’s life. The procession led by a cross (viacrucis) and Jesus’s crucifixion on Good Friday (Viernes Santo) are the peak moments of the week from both the religious and social point of view. Often more than five hundred villagers and visitors participate in this solemn five-hour procession (see Photo 1).

In May, the two days in the Catholic calendar that are celebrated yearly in Capulálpam are the Day of the Holy Cross (Día de la Santa Cruz, 3 May) and the Day of St. Isidore, the Farmer (Día de San Isidro Labrador, 15 May), the patron saint of farmers and villages. On 15 August, the whole Catholic community commemorates the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Solemnidad de la Asunción de la Virgen María).

The peak moment in the Catholic calendar for Capulálpam is the day of Saint Matthew, its patron saint, on 21 September. The three-day fiesta starts on 19 September with two processions (calendas). The “procession of the flowers” (calenda de las flores) is mainly attended by children and women. The “mid-night procession” (calenda nocturna)
or the “procession of the drunkards” (*calenda de los borrachos*), as it is sometimes also called, is – not surprisingly – more popular among men. Both *calendas* are emotionally elevated events of collective merrymaking, music, dancing with *marmotas* (coloured wooden balls attached to a pole), and drinking. The processions pass various households, like Orlando’s, as described above. These households donate food and drinks to all participants in the procession. On 20 September, fireworks (*castillo*) are lit in front of the Catholic church. On 21 September, the actual day of Saint Matthew in the Catholic calendar, a mass is held in the local church (*Templo de San Mateo*) and the festivities close with a dancing party (*baile*) in front of the church building. The organisation of all these festivities is the responsibility of a fiesta committee (*comité de los festejos*), and they are financed from the obligatory payments (*cuotas*) by all members of the community.

In early November, Catholics celebrate All Saints’ Day (*Día de Todos los Santos*, 1 November) and on the Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*, 2 November) families convene at the village cemetery to commemorate their deceased relatives. 22 November is the day of Saint Cecilia (*Santa Cecilia*), the patron saint of musicians and Church music, who is particularly honoured and commemorated by the village brass-band. December and weeks leading to Christmas (*La Navidad*) are a time of particularly heightened religious activity. Processions and collective events are held during most of the month, starting on 5 December when the effigy of the Jesus-child is taken to the house of its first *madrina*. The day of the Virgin of Juquila (*Virgen de Juquila*), one of the patron saints of the State of Oaxaca, is celebrated on 8 December, and the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe (*Virgen de Guadalupe* or *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*), the patron saint of Mexico, on 12 December. Nine consecutive candle light processions (*Las Posadas*) that also include the reenactment of the holy family’s quest for lodging in Bethlehem are held on 16–24 December.
Photo 2. People gathering in front of the Catholic church for calenda de las flores.
Photo by Toomas Gross.

Photo 3. Posada.
Photo by Toomas Gross.
Nativity scenes (*El Nacimiento*) are set up in houses and on the village square. Christmas activities culminate on Christmas Eve (*Noche Buena*) with the so-called “Rooster’s Mass” (*Misa de Gallo*) at midnight.

**FIESTA PATRONAL AND COMMUNAL INTEGRATION**

Of the above-listed celebrations and festivities, the commemoration of Saint Matthew on 21 September is without doubt the most important social and religious occasion in Capulálpam. In most Oaxacan communities, the celebration of the community’s patron saint (*la fiesta del santo patron* or *la fiesta patronal*) is the prime moment for recreating and reasserting communal identity. It is the time when most members of the community, including the “compatriots” (*paisanos*) who have migrated, reassemble. According to the Catholic perception, the community is sacred and is embodied in its patron saint. Catholics can establish a link with God by *collectively* celebrating the day of their patron saint who acts as the mediator between them and God. In other words, by participating in the fiesta villagers are paying homage to and celebrating their very own community.

As Marroquín (1996: 255) has suggested, already before the Spanish conquest every Zapotec territory was considered the property of a certain *numen* – the master of a mountain or a place who gave permission to use the territory. With Christianisation, missionaries “converted” these antique deities into new saints and the saint names were added to the village names, which were usually of Nahuatl origin (ibid.) Often saints continued to be interpreted as ancient deities, indigenous religious elements blended with Catholic ones, and communities accepted and acknowledged the patron saints rather quickly.

The first Catholic missionaries in Oaxaca, mainly Dominicans, gave names of patron saints to the Sierra communities, although little is known about the bases on which this was done. According to Aguirre Beltrán (1992: 84) who has studied the naming process in the Sierra Zongolica of the State of Veracruz, only a few names of patron saints were imposed. This was to avoid confusion and the saints chosen were generally involved in the birth and development of early Christianity. In order to limit the knowledge of the new religion to its most pristine, irreproachable and spectacular moments, only those saints whose life and death constituted an example to be followed were selected. They had to symbolise similar values embodied in the native deities to make the interchange, combination and synthesis of the features of the two religions easier (ibid.).

As a result, the complete official names of nearly two thirds (110) of all the 172 communities of the Sierra Juárez now include a supplementary Christian “label” (see Table 1). The names of male saints are the most common; among those Saint John (*San Juan*) (altogether 16 communities, for example, San Juan Tabaa), Saint Michael (*San Miguel*) (9, for example, San Miguel Yotao) and Saint James (*Santiago*) (9, for example, Santiago Xia-cui) occur with most frequency. Among female saint names, Saint Mary (*Santa María*) is by far the most common (16 communities, for example, Santa María Yavesia), followed by Saint Catherine (*Santa Catarina*) (4, for example, Santa Catarina Ixtepeji).4
Table 1. Supplementary names of the 172 communities of the Sierra Juárez.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male saint name</th>
<th>Female saint name</th>
<th>Other biblical term</th>
<th>Patriotic name</th>
<th>No additional name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of communities</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of the total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adding saint names to village names, missionaries also imposed the saints’ commemoration on the respective day in the Catholic calendar. Commemoration of the patron saint is a special moment that breaks the routine of communal life and enables people to temporarily leave aside their everyday problems. “It is an event that allows one to change daily activities and it also gives some happiness to people”, a young woman in Capulálpam suggested. Marroquín Zaleta (1995b: 94) claims that the fiesta is a “cathartic moment” in communal life, the best way to create and maintain internal cohesion. As a periodic reunion of the dispersed natives of a particular village, it contributes to communal integration and the maintenance of collective identity. Fiesta is the moment of recognition and reaffirmation of belongingness to a community, both as a physical and as a social entity. “It is the joy of the village to be together with the people from outside”, I was told in Capulálpam. “It is like celebrating one’s father and family”, a student studying in Oaxaca City but returning to Capulálpam on every such occasion, suggested.

Despite its obvious problems, reductionism in particular, the functionalistic approach to rituals has in my opinion considerable explanatory value when analyzing fiestas in rural Mexico. It is not my aim here to present a synopsis of anthropological theories of ritual, and I will limit my discussion only to selected ideas from Émile Durkheim. These, in fact, serve as antecedents of the anthropological approach to religion and rituals as a cohesive and integrative force. In The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, first published in 1912, Durkheim suggested that the function of ritual is to strengthen the bonds attaching the believer to God and that God is actually a figurative expression of the society itself. Consequently, ritual serves to attach the individual to society.

In a similar vein, the fiestas of a patron saint in the Sierra Juárez could be regarded as a celebration of the community itself. This idea corresponds to Durkheim’s (1971) view of religion as a social phenomenon and society as the actual object of religious worship. People, as Durkheim suggests, often worship their own reflection, without being aware of it. Although severely criticised (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1965; Stark and Bainbridge 1996), I find Durkheim’s analytical triangle of society, religion and collective action useful for understanding the wider meaning of communal fiestas. As Durkheim argues:

Society cannot make its influence felt unless it is in action, and it is not in action unless the individuals who compose it are assembled together and act in common. It is by common action that it takes consciousness of itself and realises its position; [...] Then it is action, which dominates the religious life, because of the mere fact that it is society, which is its source. (Durkheim 1971: 418)

In the quote above, the last sentence is in my opinion particularly significant. It could be
interpreted as a programmatic guide for anthropology of religion, stating the primacy of studying ritual (action) over the study of belief (e.g. myths). Durkheim further suggests:

Thus religion, far from ignoring the real society and making abstraction of it, is in its image; it reflects all its aspects, even the most vulgar and the most repulsive. (Ibid.: 421)

And still further:

There can be no society, which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas, which make its unity and its personality. (Ibid.: 427)

As I will demonstrate below, however, contrary to Durkheim’s argument that in rituals society is worshipped *unconsciously*, people in Oaxacan villages are quite *conscious* about celebrating their community and not just the patron saint.

**CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO THE FIESTA SYSTEM**

Various processes – especially secularisation, integration of local economies into the capitalist market system, migration and the rise of non-Catholic churches have a considerable impact on rural communities of contemporary Oaxaca. From the perspective of Catholic religious practices, the impact of these processes has generally been regarded as devastating (e.g. Aguirre Beltrán 1992; Montes García 1995). It is believed to lead to the decline of the religion’s role as an element of social cohesion. In the following discussion I will briefly look at the alleged relationship between these processes and the changes in the Catholic fiestas in the Sierra Juárez. Firstly, I will scrutinise some of the broad structural explanations of the decline. Secondly, I will look at the increasingly contested meaning of the fiestas for those who participate in them. And finally, I will discuss the impact of conversion to Protestantism on collective Catholic practices.

*Globalisation and Structural Level Changes*

The idea that different forces of globalisation have an impact on religious systems in rural Mexico is a widely shared view. For example, Aguirre Beltrán (1992), one of the pioneers of Mexican anthropology, has regarded secularisation as leading to an inevitable end of traditional religious practices in the Mexican countryside. In his apocalyptic forecast he suggests:

The traditional religious system based on the cult of saints, conspicuous consumption and the fulfilment of *cargos* as means to acquire prestige and power is probably arriving to its end; [it] seems to have given everything that it could give of itself during its long existence of almost five centuries. The secularisation of indigenous life is an irreversible process that now comes collecting dividends. (Aguirre Beltrán 1992: 196)
Not just secularisation, but also migration, poverty and structural changes in local economies are believed to affect collective religious practices. Due to out-migration various rural communities in Oaxaca have turned into “ghost-villages” (pueblos fantasmas) as they are often called. Men have migrated to the United States, or big cities in central and northern Mexico, while the local population now mostly consists of women, children and the elderly. Such villages literally live off the remittances sent by migrants, and collective communal practices have nearly vanished. No out-migration and no remittances means poverty and marginalisation that can likewise contribute to the decline of religious practices. Binford (1990) has demonstrated this in the example of the poor Zapotec peasants in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the South-Eastern part of Oaxaca. Because of the prohibitively high cost of membership, increasingly fewer members of the community joined the so-called vela associations, Catholic circles that organise certain smaller fiestas.

In a thought-provoking analysis, Montes García (1995) relates the decrease of the role of communal fiestas to the economic crisis of the “traditional” community and agricultural changes since the middle of the twentieth century. According to her logic, the decline of the cultivation of corn has played a particularly important role in this. Most of the fiestas commemorating patron saints in Oaxacan communities take place in summer or in autumn. Historically these have been periods of sowing and harvesting corn, and the Catholic fiestas were thus originally related to agricultural rituals. Growing other crops, especially the cash crops like coffee and banana has now replaced the cultivation of corn. The new agricultural calendar no longer coincides with the festive calendar. Consequently, when fiestas are held, people have no money to spend because they have no agricultural products to sell. Moreover, the new crops are not so dependent on weather and climate, and hence the protection by the patron saint is no longer necessary.

Fiestas as “Economic Suicide”

Besides scrutinising the impact of global and structural changes on collective religious practices, it is also worth looking at the growing local resistance to fiestas and Catholic rituals. Protestant rejection of the fiestas will be discussed in the next section, but collective Catholic practices are not contested by religious “dissidents” only. Although ritual occasions are powerful vehicles of collective identity, they can also reinforce existing divisions in the community. In some contexts, rituals may be interpreted as a tool of hegemonic control in the hands of the local elite. Such argumentation is in line with various theoretical discussions of ritual in anthropology. The so-called Marxist approach in particular interprets ritual as a means of legitimising social authority. Maurice Bloch (1986, 1989, 1992), for example, has in numerous studies analyzed ritual as a form of ideology that legitimates several types of domination – gender hierarchy and state domination, to name a few. Recent practice-oriented approaches to ritual, in turn, highlight the potential disjunction between different and even conflicting interpretations of ritual by different participants. Such ideas can be fruitfully applied in the Mexican context, where public rituals are remarkably numerous. Brandes (1988: 186), for instance, suggests that rural fiestas in
Mexico are means of “power and persuasion”. Fiestas reinforce power relationships, moral guidelines and informal sanctioning mechanisms. Through convincing dramatic and artistic modes of expression they persuade people of the value and efficacy of traditional norms and beliefs. Annis (1987: 90) eloquently calls the fiesta-related obligatory expenditures the “Catholic cultural tax”. Discontent with these expenditures is growing in rural Oaxaca, especially in communities where the fiestas are still financed through the mayordomía system or individual sponsorships.\textsuperscript{10} According to this system, a nominated mayordomo or, more often, a small group of mayordomos is responsible for financing the festivities.

The obligatory nature of nominations for the position of a mayordomo can be a source of conflicts, as village authorities often taken advantage of their power to impose the task on certain persons, especially wealthier migrants. An illustration of this is a well-documented case from Santa Ana Yareni, a Zapotec community in the Sierra Juárez.\textsuperscript{11} In 1995, Yareni Union, an association of natives of Yareni living in Mexico City, sent a letter to Diodoro Carrasco Altamirano, then the governor of Oaxaca. They complained that the village authorities were intentionally nominating persons living outside the community or their relatives in the village for the mayordomo positions. The authorities in turn justified their behaviour by acting according to “the customs and religious traditions of the community”, and threatened to arrest anybody who would not accept the nomination. Complaining migrants claimed that accepting the mayordomo position was an “economic suicide” for their families. Most people in Yareni had no monetary income, while the estimated cost of serving as a mayordomo was around 10–15,000 pesos (1,000–1,500 USD), a substantial amount of money in the local context. The authors of the letter suggested that religious cargos should be voluntary and pleaded the state government to intervene immediately.

Collective financing of the fiestas generally causes fewer tensions. The fact that everybody is supposed to contribute to the fiesta adds to its “communal” nature and increases its symbolic meaning as a manifestation of unity. It can also be used as a moral argument against those who refuse to collaborate, especially Protestants. But even in those communities, where fiestas are financed from everyone’s monetary contributions, nominations for time-consuming responsibilities in fiesta committees can be a source of severe criticism. As Adriana, a teacher from Capulálpam, argued:

It is pressure, nothing else, because they say that otherwise they will put you in prison. It is moral pressure. My brother, for instance, was once elected as the head of the organising committee of the fiesta of St. Matthew. He did not want this cargo but was told that he had to do it. [...] [T]hey said they cannot accept his resignation.

The blending of the religious and recreational dimensions of the fiesta can also divide opinions. In Capulálpam, for example, one of the reasons for conflict has been the fact that the communal dance party (el baile), an integral part of the fiesta of St. Matthew, is organised right after the mass and in front of the Catholic church. This is regarded as a blasphemy by some more conservative Catholics.
Another phenomenon contributing to the decline of traditional Catholic rituals in rural Oaxacan communities is the recent success of Protestant churches, especially among the indigenous population. Protestants in most villages still constitute a minority, seldom amounting to more than 10–20 per cent of the total population. However, despite their relatively low numbers, Protestant growth can have considerable socio-cultural impact. Here is not a place to discuss the overall socio-cultural impact of “Protestantisation” of the religious field in Latin America. Suffice it to say that individualistic values, emphasis on religious and human rights, as well as the gospel of prosperity, preached by some Pentecostal churches, do not change only the lives of individual converts but influence entire communities and societies.

In rural Oaxaca, the impact of conversion is most immediate and discernible namely on collective practices related to Catholicism, especially the fiestas and religious cargos. As argued above, for Catholics, the community is embodied in its patron saint who also acts as the mediator between people and the God. Protestants do not need such a mediator because their relationship with God is established through individual study of the Bible. Protestants’ opposition to being nominated as mayordomos was the reason for the earliest religious conflicts in the region (Ramírez Gómez 1991: 93), and it has also contributed to the substitution of the mayordomía system with collective financing of the fiestas. Until the 1990s, in most communities monetary contributions for the fiesta (cuota) were obligatory and charged from everyone regardless of their faith. Often the arguments used to convince non-Catholics to pay were based on the idea of moral responsibility to contribute in return for the feeling of “belonging” that the community offers to its members. Balthazar, an ex-Municipal President of Capulálpam, recounted his experience with the non-Catholics who refused to contribute:

Occasionally, some [Protestants] did not want to pay the cuota – those who were of another religion and did not like saints. I, as the representative of the authority, had to talk to them and I said: “I have seen you during the dances, playing basketball, during the fairs. Why don’t you want to cooperate? The money that you are going to give is not for the saint, it is for the procession and other things, for the fiesta of the community.” You have to explain to them so that they will not misunderstand – not everything in the fiesta is religion.

More recently, however, payments by Protestants have become voluntary, or special denomination-specific deals are made. In Capulálpam, for example, Jehovah’s Witnesses are allowed to make alternative payments directly to communal authorities. These are used to purchase light bulbs and not included in the budget for the organisation of the fiesta.

With the increase in the number of non-Catholics, the splendour of the fiesta decreases because of the decline in contributions as well as due to the diminished number of participants in the festivities. An example of such a community is Madero, a small Zapotec village of approximately 300 inhabitants. Madero’s population is split into five different religious groups, and Protestants clearly outnumber Catholics. Most collective communal events, including the fiesta of the patron saint, have disappeared and social life in Madero is centred almost entirely in religious congregations. Many Catholics
in the neighbouring communities have referred to Madero as the prime example of the disastrous effect of religious fragmentation on communal life and used it to justify their xenophobic attitude towards religious “dissidence”. In Capulálpam, for example, religious pluralism was discouraged namely by suggesting that “it would lead to what has happened in Madero, where customs (costumbres) have disappeared and the community is dead” (Gross 2003b: 483).

Protestants do not participate in the fiestas not just because they consider worshipping of saints idolatrous but also because they regard fiestas as harmful in many other ways. Such festivities promote drinking, are a waste of money and cause poverty, Protestants often explained. A consequence of religious heterogeneity within the villages is that the previous “fiesta of the community” has now transformed into the “fiesta of the Catholics”. When everybody was Catholic, religious practices did not constitute a basis for a distinctive collective identity. With the fragmentation of the religious field, however, the fiesta comes to be associated with one particular group in the community rather than the community itself.

THE PERSEVERENCE OF FIESTAS

Despite the seemingly compelling evidence of the impact of the above-scrutinised phenomena on ritual life in the villages of Oaxaca, conclusions that can be drawn from the discussion are not simple and straightforward. It is true that the spread of secular values is one of the reasons for the diminishing role of religion in the villages. Unemployment, poverty and out-migration from the rural communities undoubtedly render them socially and economically more vulnerable and this has influence on cultural and religious practices as well. The rise of Protestant churches evidently undermines the role of the Catholic Church and the importance of collective Catholic rituals. And yet, positing a definite negative relationship between these processes and the religious and social importance of fiestas in rural communities is too simplistic. In various circumstances, these very processes could be seen as having much less obvious, more complex or even reverse, invigorating impact on ritual life.

Secularisation undoubtedly leads to the decline of the religious dimension of fiestas, judging by the often rather meagre number of people attending the Catholic masses during these otherwise populous festivities. But it does not undermine the social meaning of fiestas. On the contrary, secularisation can be interpreted as adding to and “liberating” the recreational and carnivalesque dimension of the event as a form of social catharsis and breaking of the everyday routine. According to the results of my survey of 125 inhabitants of Capulálpam, nearly half (47 per cent) of the 86 Catholic respondents considered the fiesta patronal as the most important aspect of the traditional social life in their village. Only six per cent of the Catholic respondents claimed that the fiesta meant nothing to them at all. When asked to free-list the associations one had with the fiesta, relating it to the manifestation of Catholic faith was obviously most frequent (45 per cent of Catholic respondents), but associating fiestas with “happiness” and “the opportunity to socialise” were likewise quite common (26 and 22 per cent, respectively).

The impact of Protestant growth on Catholic festivities is also by no means plainly negative. Protestant presence in the villages can, almost paradoxically, augment the
religious (Catholic) meaning of the fiesta patronal. Clear association of the event with a particular religious group transforms the previously communal ritual into a Catholic one. Also, Protestantism and local traditions rooted in folk Catholicism are not always as antithetical to each other as it is generally believed, and Protestant growth in Oaxacan communities does not necessarily have a strong “de-culturising” effect (Marroquín Zaleta 1992: 24). Instead, recent decades have seen the emergence of syncretic forms of Protestantism, especially Pentecostalism. As Olga Montes García, a sociologist and native of Yatzachi, told me in an interview:

[One says] that other religions destroy the communities and their identities, but this is not true. The identities are simply re-formulated. Take Christmas in Yatzachi, for example. Although there are so many Pentecostals, it has remained the same – the music, the food and so on. The Pentecostals in Yatzachi consider themselves Zapotecs as much as the Catholics do.

In Capulálpam, my observations have been somewhat similar. Protestants often participate in communal festivities and rituals “selectively”. Adventists, for example, generally took part in Catholic funerals, although they did not enter the church for the mass, waiting outside until the coffin was carried out to the nearby cemetery.

Similarly, the impact of migration on Catholic rituals in the villages is not overly negative. Increasing migration out of the communities can actually boost the role of fiestas as moments of expressing social solidarity with one’s community of origin and reproducing the “collective self”. According to my interviews with migrants from Capulálpam to Los Angeles, fiesta retains its symbolic significance for those living abroad because “it reminds us of our community”, as they argued. Even migrants who reside in the United States illegally visit Capulálpam for the fiesta on a regular basis, despite the fact that this is risky and costly. Migrants’ relatively high level of income, and considerable remittances sent to their families contribute both directly and indirectly to the organisation and financing of the fiesta. Often richer migrants act as main sponsors of certain ritual events.

Hence, apocalyptic visions of the fate of fiestas and other Catholic rituals in rural Mexico, like Aguirre Beltrán’s suggestion cited above, seem as yet over-dramatised. The religious life and practices in the communities are changing and so is the role of fiestas, but commemorating the patron saint of the village continues to be the most important yearly event in most communities and for most people.

NOTES

1 All names in this article are pseudonyms.
2 The state with the lowest Catholic population in Mexico is Chiapas, where Catholics constitute “only” 63.8 per cent of the total population (INEGI 2005: 140).
3 The so-called Cristero Rebellion (1926–29) was the culmination of the tension that escalated between the Catholic Church and the State in the first decades of the 20th century and especially during the years immediately following the Mexican Revolution in 1917. On Cristero rebellion, see, for instance, Olivera (1966), Meyer (1976) and Blancarte (1992).
4 It is perhaps worth stressing that the lack of a saint name in the full name of the village is not an indication that the community has no patron saint. The official name of Capulálpam, for exam-
ple, is Capulálpm de Méndez, even though the patron saint of the village is Saint Matthew.

5 An interested reader can consult Bell (1992) or Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) for more general theoretical overviews of the study of ritual in anthropology.

6 This division reflects the late 19th and early 20th century debate between “idealists” (the “myth school”) and “pragmatists” (the “ritual school”) in the study of religion. The latter favoured the empirical study of performed, external forms of religion over the study of narratives, myths and beliefs (Bowie 2006: 269).

7 Montes García (1995: 27) proves statistically that since the 1950s the amount of arable land used for the cultivation of corn in Oaxaca has been decreasing constantly, while increasingly more land is used for growing fruits, coffee and sugarcane.

8 The focus on practice and power has proven to be particularly useful in anthropological approaches to carnivals (e.g. Cohen 1993).

9 In their study of public rituals in Mexico Beezley et al. (1994: xiv) refer to a survey from 1977 according to which altogether 5083 civil and religious occasions were celebrated in the country yearly; there were no significant public celebrations on only nine days a year.

10 In most contemporary communities the mayordomía system has been replaced by collective financing of the event. The fiestas are organized by special fiesta committees (comité de los festejos) that collect fixed obligatory contributions from all households in the community. This does not mean, however, that individual sponsorship of festive events has vanished altogether. “Sporadic mayordomías,” the ritual content of which is concerned with life cycle events like baptisms, engagements, weddings and funerals still exist (Stephen, Dow 1990). Although these occasions are more family-centred, they can still mobilise considerable numbers of people. The same applies to sponsoring particular events during the fiestas, like Orlando’s family’s reception of the calenda, as described in the introduction to this article.

11 The following description is based on an exchange of letters and documents preserved in the State Archive of Oaxaca (District of Ixtlán de Juárez section, 1993–95, 8/1243).

12 This has been demonstrated in numerous studies focusing on Protestantism in Oaxaca (e.g. Marroquín Zaleta 1995a; Montes García 1997; Gross 2003a; 2003b), Mexico (e.g. Dow, Sandstrom 2001; Dow 2005) and Latin America in general (e.g. Martin 1990; Stoll 1990; Cleary, Stewart-Gambino 1997).

13 Kearney (1991: 347) cites Catholics from Ixtepeji who in the 1960s similarly pointed to the alarming examples of the neighbouring Ixtlán and Yotao. According to Kearney’s informants, the role of fiestas in Ixtlán and Yotao had declined because these communities were “divided by religion”.

14 Illegal migrants generally have to cross the Sonora desert to return to the United States. “Coyotes”, special guides who take the illegal migrants over the border charge them up to 3000 dollars for the service.
SOURCES


REFERENCES


INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática) 2005. La diversidad religiosa en México. Aguascalientes: INEGI.


ABSTRACT
Author* deals with 19th century intellectuals of Olonets Karelian origin who started to be interested in local language, culture and ways of life. They started to compile and publish corresponding texts and it meant the beginning of ethnic mobilization of Karelians. Author starts with a brief overview of local historical background and continues with activities of three intellectuals of Karelian origin (I. V. Kondratyev, M. N. Smirnov, N. F. Leskov).

KEYWORDS: Russian Karelia ● Karelians ● local lore ● ethnic consciousness ● ethnic mobilization

At the end of the nineteenth century a large group of Karelians lived in the Olonets province (guberniya), part of the present-day Republic of Karelia at the north-western Russia. According to the 1897 census the Karelian population comprised 16.3 per cent of the entire province (Pokrovskaya 1974: 103). The proximity of the capital, St. Petersburg, the Russian Empire’s largest economic and cultural centre, as well as the close presence of Finland, then a part of Russia, had a major influence on the ethnic development of Karelians. This paper seeks to demonstrate the preconditions, conditions and outcomes of the development of what may be called “historical oral tradition”: an approach combining history, ethnography, folklore, culture and lifestyle of a certain area, which was carried out by local people themselves amongst the Karelians of Olonets province at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By the mid-nineteenth century, Karelians constituted a large ethnic group inhabiting the northern provinces of European Russia. Primary and relatively reliable data about the population of the Karelians was collected and published by the prominent scholar (later a member of the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences) Peter von Köppen. Ac-

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According to his data, based on the tax revision of 1835, the total population of Karelians in Russia comprised 171,695 persons. The largest groups of Karelians were found in both Tver and Olonets provinces. At the time of the first Russia-wide census of 1897, Karelians had consolidated their numbers in the two provinces and the total number had increased to 208,101 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Pre-revolutionary Karelian Population by province.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province (guberniya)</th>
<th>Karelian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangelsk</td>
<td>11,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novgorod</td>
<td>27,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olonets</td>
<td>43,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tver</td>
<td>84,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>3,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaroslavl</td>
<td>1,283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the population data in the table, one can conclude that the Karelian ethnic group was influenced by two tendencies in the middle and second half of the nineteenth century. The first can be defined as an increase in the population of the Karelians, and the second as assimilation, which, at that time, was weak. However, in none of the province were Karelians a majority. In the northern provinces the majority of the population comprised velikorossy (“Great” Russians), including 294,721 in Arkhangelsk and 284,902 in the Olonets province (Vseobshchaya perepis 1900). In terms of social status, the majority of Karelians were illiterate peasants. According to the 1897 census of the Olonets province, only 877 Karelians lived in towns, while the remaining 58,537 persons were rural dwellers. Literate Karelians in the province numbered only 6,182, or 10.4 per cent of the total Karelian population (Pokrovskaya 1974: 103, 111).

As a result – not surprisingly – it was the representatives of other ethnic groups who undertook the academic study of Karelians in the Olonets province from the beginning of the nineteenth century. For example, the founder of Finno-Ugrian studies in Russia, Anders Johan Sjögren, was a frequent visitor to the Olonets province during his 1824–1829 expedition, making an important contribution to the study of Karelians.1 The history, ethnography, culture and lifestyle of Karelians was also studied by officials, schoolteachers, representatives of the Orthodox Church and Russian travellers. Their articles, essays, and notes on the Karelians were published in the local newspaper, Olonetskie gubernskie vedomosti (Olonets Province Gazette), published in Petrozavodsk from 1838. The Olonets statistical committee, established in Petrozavodsk in 1835, was another contributor towards the study of the lore of the Karelians.2 Thus, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, travellers and academics from other ethnic groups, mainly Russians and Finns, also studied the Karelian ethnic group. The vast majority of peasant Karelians, cut off from even primary education, simply attempted to survive under severe climatic conditions. Those Karelians who were able to enter the ranks of the gentry or clergy, also changed their ethnic identification, declaring themselves to be Russian. Consequently, for several centuries the only means of retaining historical
data and its transmission had been through various oral activities amongst the ethnic Karelians was including oral folklore, traditional runo-singing, legend and story-telling and other related activities.

THE BEGINNINGS OF KARELIAN MOBILIZATION: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The situation began to change in the nineteenth century, influenced by the development of education. In particular, a network of church-run schools began to turn out increasing numbers of literate Karelians, primarily amongst urban citizens. The development of market relationships promoted the migration of Karelians mainly to St. Petersburg and Finland. Life in large multi-ethnic cities, such as St. Petersburg and Vyborg, developed a wider perception of the world around them, stimulated education, and focussed ethnic self-identification amongst Karelians. The success and development of historical science in Russia also influenced the development of Karelians. From 1818–1829, Nikolay Karamzin published his 12-volume Istoriya gosudarstva Rossiiskogo (The History of the Russian State). This work of historical fiction covered Russian history to the seventeenth century. These and other factors in the first half of the nineteenth century encouraged the establishment of local studies and research amongst the Karelians. The first students of Karelian lore represented urban citizens and merchants, who were the most educated and active Karelians. Ivan Vasilyevich Kondratyev was one of the first such individuals. There is little biographical information about Kondratyev. His father was a wealthy merchant in Olonets. Ivan Kondratyev had a curious nature and taught himself how to read and write. He was an ethnic Karelian and spoke Russian, Karelian and Finnish.

After 1815 Kondratyev worked as an assistant in a timber factory in Olonets. In 1825, after witnessing irresponsible logging practices, he made a report to the Ministry of Finance on the abuse of power and presented his own draft management plan. After an investigation took up Kondratyev’s report, the offenders were brought to justice. Kondratyev, “for his report and diligence for the state was honoured with the Monarch’s financial reward of 1,000 roubles”. However, as a result of this investigation, Kondratyev’s relationship with Olonets officials went bad. He was not issued a passport for five years and was not permitted to leave Olonets until 1829. However, this did not impede his public and scientific activities, which included research into marsh and lake drainage to improve agriculture, the organisational reform of sawmills, the construction of a navigable canal between the rivers Olonka and Svir, and measures to limit smuggling from Finland. In April 1836 Kondratyev wrote a long report entitled “On the improvement of life conditions of state peasants of Olonets province”, which he sent to the Minister of Finance, Egor Frantsevich Kankrin. Soon afterwards, Olonets police began investigations into Kondratyev’s activities and following these, there was little record of him until his death was registered in 1850.

This list of activities and written works suggest that here was an extremely energetic, enterprising, compassionate, and education-orientated individual and, not surprisingly, Ivan Kondratyev was to be the first student of traditional lore amongst the Olonets Karelians. The formation of his lore interests was encouraged by, above all else, his love
for his “little motherland” – the ancient town of Olonets, established in 1649 – with its large population of Livvik Karelians and high level of the urban culture, a result of the proximity of the capital St. Petersburg.

In June 1836 Kondratyev sent Ignatii Semenov, the Olonets Archbishop, three of his works: “Memorandum on oral stories of the Olonets Koreliaks-raskolniks and on their sect, which has not yet been recorded” (along with an enclosed “Memorandum on Koreliaks-raskolniks”), “Memorandum on the population and foundation of Olonets and an explanation of the origin of some Karelian words and names of some places” (with an enclosed “Memorandum on Olonets”), and “Memorandum on curious events which happened during Imperial visits through Olonets” (with enclosed “Memorandum on high visits”). These latter two items were found in the archive of the Synod and later published by Evgeni Mikhailovich Prilezhaev in the Olonetskie gubernskie vedomosti (1891; reprinted 1894: 227–237).

It is important to note that some of Kondratyev’s publications were cut by the censors. In the “Memorandum on Koreliaks-raskolniks”, Kondratyev gave a description of twelve religious ceremonies and regulations of the Karelian Old Believers. This was the first and practically only work which described the philosophy of the Olonets Karelian Old Believers in the first half of the nineteenth century and suggests that Old Believer religious traditions were widely practised by the Olonets Karelians and specifically adapted in this area. However, the later book of Orthodox historian Sergei Artobolevskii (1904: 177) contains only summaries of eight of these, while numbers two, seven, eleven and twelve are missing altogether.

Another work by Ivan Kondratyev, “Memorandum on the population and foundation of Olonets and an explanation of the origin of some Karelian words and names of some places” addressed the history and toponymy of Olonets Karelia. It contained twenty-seven short chapters. One of the chapters under the heading “Real settlement of the Karelians” has population figures and distribution analysis. The concluding part of Kondratyev’s work provided an explanation of more than twenty Karelian toponyms. The majority of the names in their origin are related to physical and geographical realities of the region, its flora and fauna. Kondratyev gave two Karelian names for the river Olonka: it was called Allavoine (Lower) below the town of Olonets and Iiulelgoine (Upper) above the town. The place to the north of the town was called Tagavoine (Back Districts). On the basis of these toponyms one can make valuable conclusions about Olonets Karelians’ ethnocentric worldview. The centre of Olonets Karelia is the town of Olonets, which divides the Oلونka River into two parts and separates the Back Parishes (volost) from the rest Karelian territory. The toponym “Back Parishes” is remarkable in itself, demonstrating that the settlement of Olonets and the Karelians of Olonets were oriented to the south, to Russia. This is a reflection of the long history of the Karelians: life under the power and protection of the Russian state, trade with central Russia, Russian cities, etc.

The philosophy and academic activity of Ivan Kondratyev cannot be fully understood without taking into account socio-cultural and ethno-cultural aspects in Olonets. Nineteenth-century Olonets was a town in Olonets province. There were many Karelians among the population of Olonets. In 1847 there were 1,011 inhabitants in Olonets, including 500 male and 511 female residents. In his report of 7 April 1846 an official of the Olonets police reported that 513 local Karelians (209 men and 304 women), includ-
ing 74 merchants, 366 town citizens and 73 peasants (together with the members of their families), as well as 25 Lutheran Finns (10 men and 15 women) and 20 Orthodox Finnish Karelians (8 men and 12 women) were resident in Olonets. Thus, in the mid-nineteenth century, when Kondratyev started his studies into folklore and oral tradition, half of the population of Olonets was Karelian and, linguistically related to them, Finns.

It was specifically in the Karelian community of Olonets where Kondratyev’s interests in the history of the local area were formed. Another factor which contributed to Kondratyev’s studies was the Russian influence on the life and culture of the Olonets Karelians. This influence was demonstrated in the adherence of the Olonets Karelians to Orthodoxy. Therefore, it was not accidental that Kondratyev passed his written manuscripts on to Archbishop Ignatii. The proximity of St. Petersburg had a significant economic and cultural influence on Olonets. Because of this factor in the first half of the nineteenth century the Olonets Karelians, unlike other ethnic groups, were the most prepared for collecting and preserving historical data about the past of their area and their ethnic group, not in oral forms but in semi-academic manuscripts. Because of the the above-mentioned factors the study of Karelian oral tradition could emerge only among the Karelian population of Olonets.

**DEVELOPING ETHNIC SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

In the second half of the nineteenth century the conditions for the formation of ethnic self-consciousness among the Karelians, and other Finno-Ugrian peoples of the Russian North, were more favourable than before. The major reforms of Alexander II gave several thousand Karelian peasants the freedom to manage their own economic activity. Many Karelians and Vepsians began to migrate to St. Petersburg and Finland in search of cash earnings. This economic migration had great significance. It gave the Finno-Ugrian peoples of Karelia the opportunity to enrich themselves due to a corresponding entrepreneurial nature and diligence. Many of them became rich well-to-do business people. On the other hand, life in the big cities, city culture, contacts with the well educated and representatives of other ethnic groups increased the ethnic self-consciousness of the Karelians. The most significant group of Karelian migrants were those who went to Finland and who were able, thanks to their bilingual skills, to achieve success in business as economic mediators between Russia and Finland. Moreover, those Olonets Karelians who spent many years in Finland were influenced by West European culture, a factor in the development of Karelian ethnic self-consciousness and lore-studies.

It is not accidental that in the post-reform period the most famous and active student of Karelian lore was the businessman Miron Nikolaevich Smirnov. Born in 1815 in the village of Kärgila of Syamozero-Kungozero (Säämäjärvi-Kungojärvi [Kongojärvi]) community (obshchestvo) Petrozavodsk district (yezd) Olonets province at the family of a Karelian peasant, Smirnov was sent as a small boy “to serve” the rich bread merchant Filimon Metlinskii in Olonets. This work involved much travel and the young Smirnov was able to visit Petrozavodsk, Povenets, Lodeynoye Pole, and many other settlements along the Svir River. He was also sent on errands across Lake Ladoga to Finland. On one occasion Metlinskii sent the fifteen-year-old boy deliver 60,000 roubles across Vyete-
gra to Rybinsk on the Volga River. These trips, undoubtedly, helped to extend the young boy’s views experience.

A few years later Smirnov met two local Olonetsians who, at a young age, had moved to Finland, built timber factories there and exported their produce to Western Europe and “thus faced the civilisation of Western Europe” (Smirnov 1890: vi). Smirnov was offered a job by one of the men and together with his new employer left “Korel-Oloniia for remote Finland” (ibid.). According to his autobiography, three years after moving to Finland, Smirnov became manager of the Vuokala “first-class” factory; four years later he was already supervising two, and then later four factories. In total, Smirnov worked for twenty-two years as manager of various timber factories. In September 1853 Miron Smirnov and his family were excluded from the peasant register of Petrozavodsk district and re-registered as merchants in the Finnish town of Joensuu. Gradually Smirnov built up his own business in Finland.

The period from the beginning of the 1860s until the mid-1880s was a very active time in Smirnov’s life in terms of business, the study of local and historical tradition, and indeed, in charitable acts. From the end of the 1860s in his native land, Syamozero Smirnov was renowned for his charity. When zemstvo schools were opening in the Olonets province, Smirnov took the most active participation in the opening of the zemstvo school in Syamozero at the beginning of 1874, and later covered all its expenses, donat-
ed books to its library and became one of its trustees. In 1881 Smirnov initiated a transformation of the school into a one-class “exemplary” school under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, donating 200 roubles for this venture which was initiated in March 1883. However, Smirnov’s benevolent activities were cut short by bankruptcy later that decade. He lived out his remaining years in obscurity until his death, the exact date and place of which are not known.

Miron Smirnov’s studies of local tradition and lore started only in 1868, when he visited his native Syamozero after twenty-five years of absence. The impressions of this visit were published as “Syamozero: From the Letters of a Self-educated Karelian”, to be followed by Smirnov’s historical treatise in “Karelians, their history, folk lifestyle and Karelian-Russian literacy” and a depiction of local folklore in “Ruochin-saari – the Swedish island in Lake Syamozero”.

Smirnov considered the Russian people as being the closest to Karelians in sociocultural aspects. Yet, a well-expressed ethnic Karelian identity and self-recognition of language and ethnic relations to other Finno-Ugrian peoples was also characteristic of Miron Smirnov. A very important activity for Smirnov was the active promotion of the development of his own ethnicity and to disseminate knowledge about it amongst the educated part of society at large, thus entitling Smirnov the credit of being one of the first activists of the Karelian national movement.

Nikolay Feofilaktovich Leskov (1871–1915), a talented Karelian writer, ethnographer, folklorist and publicist, was one of the first individuals to raise the issues of social, national and cultural development of the Karelians of Olonets province. Born in Syvatozero (Pyhäjärvi) on 29 October 1871 to a local Karelian psalm-reader (or according to another source, to a priest), he graduated from an Orthodox seminary in Petrozavodsk, and later entered a Orthodox academy in St. Petersburg, from which he graduated in 1895 with a degree in theology. In St. Petersburg Leskov established contacts with the
Department of Ethnography of the Russian Geographical Society. During 1892–1894 the Society sent him on three trips “for ethnographic observations” of the Karelians of Olonets. These tasks fulfilled Leskov’s own desire to do something useful for his Karelian homeland and its people.

In 1892 Leskov’s first travel report was published in the Society’s journal Zhivaya starina (The Living Past), within which he concludes that despite the influence of Russians, Karelians maintain a separate tradition through their rites and rituals (Leskov 1893b: 432–436). Soon other publications followed, proving Leskov to be a talented ethno-linguist in his analysis of language borrowings and the strong mutual influence of Russians and Karelians in the region. By the end of 1893, further publications dealt with oral riddles, puzzles, proverbs and songs, demonstrating Leskov’s versatility as a folklorist (Leskov 1893a: 532–540; 1893b: 540; 1893c: 541–553). Leskov published many runos and songs sung by Ekaterina Turu, a Karelian peasant woman from the village of Borodin-Navolok in Petrozavodsk district, some of which were later reprinted in the well-known Finnish publication Suomen kansan vanhat runot (Ancient Poems of the Finnish People) (Niemi 1927: 68–76). The following year Leskov wrote about the Karelian festival “Viändüöid”, the sacred period between the Days of St. John (23 June) and St. Peter (29 June), the article for which included much detailed information about folk medicine, spells and rituals. Another article by Leskov was devoted to Karelian funeral customs (Leskov 1894b: 514–517).

In the summer of 1893 Leskov, upon the request of the Russian Geographical Society, carried out a survey amongst the population in Serdobol (Sortavala) district of Vyborg province and Petrozavodsk and Olonets districts of the Olonets province (Leskov 1894b: 514–517).
The material gathered included a comparative study of the Olonets Karelians and the Karelians of the Finnish Lake Ladoga area, the results of which indicated the numerous differences between the two groups:

The Finnish Karelian is far ahead of his Olonets native brother. Here, you do not see the ignorance that is still quite common in the forest settlements of Olonets Karelia. The Finnish Karelian has seen much and heard much in his life. He freely handles reading and writing Finnish. His *tupa* (house) is placed on a high stone foundation and the roof is covered with strong wooden planks [...] of which our Olonets Karelian could not *not even* dream. (Leskov 1894a: 19)

Several additional ethnographic essays and Karelian fairy-tales in Russian translation appeared by the end of 1894. That same year, Leskov was commissioned to carry out research on the closely-related Vepsians of the Ojat’ valley, the results of which also found their way into *Zhivaya starina* (Leskov 1895a: 1–13). The following summer Leskov was sent to study the Karelians of Povenets district, after which he attempted to give comparative ethnographic characteristics of the Karelians and the Russians living in the North: “These peoples historically have been living next to each other, shoulder to shoulder, have always been neighbours and have adopted much from each other” (Leskov 1895b: 279).

The academic activity of Nikolay Leskov was based on a deep sympathy for the difficult situation of the Karelians and he suggested an entire detailed programme for improving their conditions. The ethnographer thought that the Karelians, apart from land cultivation, had to be given permanent sources of income and for trade, highlighting the Finnish experience of forestry and factory work. Leskov underlined the need for improved communications, schools and religious education in the native tongue, and improved medical services – and, he identified the main obstacle to this as the attitude of local authorities, which he summarised as: “Why do Karelians need all this? [...] The purpose of Russian schooling and Slavonic religious services [...] is to teach a Karelian to speak Russian, not much else really.” (Leskov 1895b: 286) In publishing these thoughts, Leskov gradually went beyond academic boundaries, and became an ideologist for the Karelian national movement. His article, “A trip to Karelia” (Leskov 1895b: 279–297) can be considered the climax of Leskov’s academic creativity, emphasizing the qualities of the author – his knowledge of the Karelian language, folklore and customs, and sincere love of his people – enriched by his experiences from expeditions and readings.

Despite a very productive partnership with the journal *Zhivaya starina*, in which he published sixteen articles, Leskov also published a popular short story “Couple of turnips” in a *belles-lettres* style on the conditions of the Karelian peasants in the *Istoricheskii vestnik* (The Historical Gazette) (Leskov 1893d: 690–699). The author was influenced by the traditions of Russian literature – democratisation and critical realism. The short story is examined with deep sympathy for the life of the Karelian peasantry and represents a hidden protest against their harsh conditions. This story caused a scandal and elicited a response in the same journal, an article entitled “Outrageous Poverty” by Alexander Sobornov (1893: 844–848). This retired member of the local *apparat* had previously published several essays on the nature of Karelians (e.g. Sobornov 1876), and would do so later (1895: No. 41 5–6), in which he arrogantly dismisses the problems of the Karelians. This was typical of the environment surrounding Leskov and his work.
However the success of the first short story inspired Leskov to publish two more in *Istorichehii vestnik* – one entitled “Died of Natural Causes” (1894d: 330–342) and the second “Katti and Matti” (1895c: 712–722), the latter signed “N. F. Leskov-Korelskii”, an expression of his ethnic self-consciousness and demonstrative pride in belonging to this ethnic group. Despite some literary weaknesses, these short stories are the first works of a national Karelian literature.

In 1895 Leskov entered the Orthodox academy in St. Petersburg. In the summer of 1896, he returned to Petrozavodsk and in June became an assistant inspector in an Orthodox college. However, a year later he was transferred to Kargopol as a lecturer at the town’s Orthodox college. This demotion and exile to a remote district can be explained as an attempt by the authorities to prevent the ethnographer’s further research and writing activities – there was no Karelian population in Kargopol district – and as a punishment for his refusal to take a religious title. From this point forward, Leskov did not publish a single article on the Karelian people. After a successful and popular stay in Kargopol, Leskov returned to Petrozavodsk in 1908 and became a lecturer at the Orthodox college. He died on 5 November 1915 of a heart attack due to stress. The works left behind by Leskov are of great academic significance. They are full of the ideas of the social and cultural development of the Karelian people and are of great interest even today. Moreover, Leskov represents one of the first members of the Karelian national intelligentsia, who tried to serve his people as a specialist in traditional folk culture, and denounced those who abused their power over the people. The ban on further research on the Karelians forced on Leskov, which became a general policy of the Tsarist authorities, drove the few representatives of the Karelian intelligentsia to rebel or join the Soviets after 1917.

CONCLUSIONS

The activities of the three above-mentioned Karelian scholars demonstrate the main stages in the specific peculiarities of formation and development of Karelian ethnic self-consciousness shaped through the study of one’s own ethnic group and settlement. In common, these three individuals had a shared birthplace (the city of Olonets and surrounding villages), similar early education (Kondratyev and Smirnov were literate, but they did not graduate secondary school (gymnasium) actually, so both of them have only primary education, formal or unformal), a shared urban experience and influence of St. Petersburg, and significantly, all three felt the influence of nearby Finland. Naturally, differences between these men did play a role in their work – Kondratyev was a Russified Karelian and felt more distant from the Karelian masses than did either Smirnov or Leskov – yet all acknowledged the close relationship between Finns and Karelians, and the proximity of Finland stimulated the formation of early ideas of a common Finno-Ugrian kinship amongst the Karelian students of their own lore and traditions by the second half of the nineteenth – early twentieth centuries.

The significance of Karelian ethnic lore-studies in the formation of ethnic consciousness amongst the Karelians of Olonets province should not be overestimated. The Karelian lore students were few, and their works had a limited audience. Yet this brief glimpse at the ideas expressed by these first academics of Karelian lore is of great inter-
est and topical today amongst a new generation of Karelian activists, requiring a second look and republishing.

**Acknowledgement**

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**NOTES**

1 For more details about A. J. Sjögren and his academic activities, see Branch 1973; also Pashkov 2000: 22–32. This paper does not include the active study of other Finno-Ugrian peoples of the region by Finnish academics.
2 The contribution of Russian research to the study of the Karelians of Olonets province is outlined in Pashkov 1997: 205–211.
3 For biographical information about Kondratyev, see Prilezhaev 1894: 227–228 (a reprint of Prilezhaev 1891); Elenevskii 1961: 61–63, 66–67.
4 NARK, f. 1, op. 36, d. 67/26, l. 4–4ob.
5 Kondratyev published most of these ideas through an active, but short-term period of cooperation with the St. Petersburg newspaper *Zemledelcheskaya gazeta* (The Agricultural Gazette) (see Kondratyev 1835; 1836).
7 For more about Olonets lore-study, see Pashkov 1989: 59–63.
8 The full text is in the RGIA, f. 834, op. 2, d. 1666, l. 3–4.
9 For the text, see RGIA, f. 834, op. 2, d. 1666, l. 4ob.-13.
10 For more detail about the ethno-centric model of the world, using the comparative example of the nearby Pomor region, see Terebikhin 1993: 8–11.
11 Statistics from Zimmerman 1855: 112 and NARK, f. 1, op. 36, d. 67/26, l. 5.
12 NARK, f. 4, op. 18, d. 83/812, l. 23ob.-24.
13 Zemstvo – elective district council in pre-1917 Russia.
14 NARK, f. 78, op. 1, d. 16/247, l. 86ob.
15 NARK, f. 78, op. 1, d. 16/247, l. 113-113ob., 116, 128-128ob.
18 See Smirnov 1875. Reprinted in both Smirnov 1875–1876: 5–11; and Smirnov 1890: 23–33.
19 For biographical information on Leskov, see Krylov 1915: 121–126; Superanskii 1915a: 614; 1915b; Gordeev 1992: 42.
20 For example, Leskov 1893, 415–419; Leskov 1892c: 97–103.
21 Leskov 1894b: 514–517. For a modern ethnographer’s view of this Karelian celebration, see Konkka 1992: 28–45.
SOURCES

NARK – National Archive of the Republic of Karelia (Национальный архив Республики Карелия).
RGIA – Russian State Historical Archive (Российский государственный исторический архив).

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CONTEXT-RELATED MELODIES IN ORAL CULTURE: AN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE WORDS-AND-MUSIC RELATIONSHIPS IN LOCAL SINGING TRADITIONS

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ABSTRACT
In oral folk song traditions we often find many lyrics, but not nearly as many melodies. The terms “polyfunctionalism”, “group melodies” or “general melodies” have been used by Estonian researchers to indicate the phenomenon that many lyrics were sung to only one, or a small handful, of tunes. The scarcity of melodies is supposed to be one of several related phenomena characteristic to an oral, text-centred singing culture. In this article the Estonian folk song tradition will be analysed against a quantity of melodies and their usage in the following aspects: word-and-melody relationships and context-and-melody relationships in Karksi parish (south Estonia); a singer; and native musical terms and the process of singing and (re)creation.

KEYWORDS: ethnomusicology ● regilaul ● formula melody ● folk song improvisation ● folk singer

INTRODUCTION
In this article an attempt will be made to describe and analyse certain aspects of oral singing culture, which appear at first as the abundance of lyrics and scarcity of melodies, causing the same melodies to be sung with many texts. Researchers point this out using various terms. The use of limited musical material characterises (at least partially) several traditional song cultures which are quite different according to their location and music style, e.g. Balto-Finnic, Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian peoples, Central- and East-Asian peoples, and also Western folk music and church music, etc. For example, similar phenomena are described or mentioned as used by the Izhorians (as “the formula principle of melodics”, 1 Gomon 1977: 283), the Votians (one typical melody movement was used in different song genres, Rüütel 1977: 257), the Maris (Cheremisses) (melodies were not “cleaved” to lyrics in some song genres, Gerasimov 1977: 413), the Nanais and Udega (a singer used just one melody for Nanai songs and another for Udega songs, Lintrop 1991: 34) and also in Tyva (“In different regions people sing different lyrics on the same melody”, Yat-Kha). Jēkabs Vītoliņš writes about Latvian traditional wedding songs: “In this song group melodies occur that are also known with other lyrics, the absence of a firm connection between lyrics and melody is quite a widespread phenomenon in Latvian folk song” (Vītoliņš 1986: 48). He quotes Latvian
folk singer Anna Dombrova’s words about an old wedding song melody: “This tune has been used for all dainas (wedding, funeral and satirical songs) – we had this tune in Lizuma” (ibid.: 44). Similar comments are made about the Chinese folk tradition by Dutch ethnomusicologist Antoinet Shimmelpenninck:

In Chinese shan’ge singers refer to “their” or “the local” tune, indicating that they have only one tune available. One tune can serve to carry hundreds of different texts. [...] The singers themselves refer to the music of their shan’ge as “one tune”. (Shimmelpenninck 1997: 130)

Velle Espeland describes the singing of Scandinavian lullabies:

It is obvious that it is possible in such a simple formula melody to sing lyrics of very different kinds. [...] It is however typical that many lullabye lyrics often are sung on the same melody. (Espeland 1995: 253)

In Western church music several melodies have been borrowed from secular songs and it is common to use one melody for different lyrics (Schweitzer 1908), e.g. every song in the Lutheran Hymnal carries an indication of whether the lyrics should be sung to the song’s “own melody” or to the melody of another song (KLP 1992). Quite free usage of melodies can be found in contemporary Western folk musics, e.g. in Erie Canal music new lyrics are often composed to pre-existing melodies (ECC).

There is not yet a generally accepted term to denote this kind of uneven relationship between the lyrics and melodies. In Estonian folkloristics the phenomenon is described as the use of “group tunes”, “polyfunctional” or “general” tunes (Tampere 1956a: 12; Rüütel 1997: 48). The term “group” denotes here that many different lyrics are sung to one melody.

Every singer, and in fact, every locality, had a very small number of tunes and so they were used with different lyrics. Every tune was an artistic generalisation that expressed thoughts and feelings characteristic to the whole folk song genre (e.g. in work songs and ritual songs) [...] Group tunes dominate in various satirical songs and “hits” about local events up to the present day. (Tampere 1956a: 12)

In opposition, the term “specific tune” is used to refer to song lyrics with their own melodies.

Shimmelpenninck (1997: 129–130) has coined the term “monothematism” for Chinese folk music to describe “one-tune” song areas, where singers perform the bulk of their lyrics to a single musical “theme”. Some music folklorists have used the expressions “formulaic melody”, “formulaic principle” or “formulism” for simple melodies, based on repetitions, so that they are easily adaptable for different lyrics in oral tradition (Gomon 1977: 283; Espeland 1995: 253; Schimmelpenninck 1997: 287).

Although the usage of “group melodies” is well known, the phenomenon has not been thoroughly studied yet, except for a monograph by Schimmelpenninck about Chinese folk music. She supposes that the reason of this incuriousness can be that “fact is so generally known that it is taken for granted” (Shimmelpenninck 1997: 130). In Estonia the existence of group melodies was clearly stated by Herbert Tampere 1956a. In earlier times the phenomenon had often been described in folklore collecting diaries as lack of melodic variety; the expression “poverty of melodies” occurs in older folk music reviews (Tampere 1935: 14).
There could be a lack of motivation to highlight the scarceness of melodies among researchers, as since the late 1800s folklore had to serve both as a main resource of Estonian national culture and also as the proof of its value. In such an ideological context melodic humdrum might have seemed rather a deficiency than an asset of local folklore. The variety of melodies, published in Estonian folk song anthologies, has been compiled from regional singing traditions, usually within the limits of a parish or village, where each singer knew only some of those melodies (Tampere 1956–1965).4

Actually, the singing of many texts to only few melodies is an interesting field of research, as it seems to have close connections to oral transmission, the function of singing, the (re)creation of songs, conceptions about music and more generally, to human creativity. Espeland writes about Scandinavian lullabies:

The fact that extensive text material is used with the same melody, makes it easier to sing it a long time, even if the melody is strophic and not as flexible as the formula melody. (Espeland 1995: 253)

There is also an implication that melodic unity is related to text (re)creation in Chinese folk songs:

[...]

The flexible structure of the tunes [...] facilitates a free and uninhibited flow of words, and provides the singer with extra time to “think ahead” and recapture his texts. In view of such musical properties, not many different tunes are needed to carry local text repertory. (Schimmelpenninck 1997: 324)

The usage of group melodies is usually expressed in general terms and we have quite little exact data about real words-and-melody relationships and restrictions that ruled the choice of melodies. The present research is based on the Estonian folk song tradition, including alliterative songs with syntactic and semantic parallelism – mainly regihau songs and some other archaic vocal genres. Depending on local tradition, group melodies could be used in different contexts, they were more closely combined with the structure of the text than its content (Rüütel 1997: 48). But some melody types (and melodic styles) depended narrowly on function of a song, so they occurred in only one genre and can be described as “monofunctional”, e.g. melodies of north Estonian swinging songs (Tampere 1956a: 12; Rüütel 1997: 50). Ingrid Rüütel has statistically analysed functions of Votian one-line polyfunctional melodies and found their positive correlation with the more ancient song genres, especially with wedding songs (Rüütel 1977; 1982: 42). It is not an easy task to study this kind of problem today, since we are dealing with a song culture from the past, mainly available via archival sources.

The main material for the present research comes from the Estonian Folklore Archives (referred to as ERA), including old folk songs recorded and transcribed with (unfortunately rare) comments, folklore collecting diaries and memories about singing. The main drawback when seeking the wider picture of old singing traditions is unbalanced, text-centred information: the most extensive material about folk songs is a bulk of lyrics written down without melody or comment. However, there are also plenty of folk songs with both lyrics and melody, although unfortunately they are not recorded in a traditional singing context but usually during an interview at an informant’s home. To get a more diverse picture of melody circulation in oral singing tradition, the archived material is complemented by interviews with contemporary regihau singers who use
folk song in its primary function, i.e. for singing within a group (*versus* its secondary function as staged performing).

In the following, the Estonian folk song tradition will be briefly introduced and then analysed against the quantity of melodies and their usage in five aspects: word-and-melody relationship, and context-and-melody relationship, in Karksi parish (south Estonia), a singer, vernacular musical terms, and the process of singing and recreation. It is probable that by integrating different kinds of materials we can (re)construct a picture of how melodies and lyrics function(ed) in Estonian oral music culture.

**ESTONIAN FOLK SONGS**

Estonian old folk songs come from the ancient Balto-Finnic song tradition and their texts are characterised by alliteration and syntactic and semantic parallelism. These songs represent a different song culture, both from Western folk music and more recent Estonian folk music, including end-rhymed strophic songs that spread during the late 1700s and 1800s (in more detail Rüütel 1997). Old Estonian folk songs were transmitted in the last centuries primarily by female singers. According to their function and form, old folk songs fall into two large groups:

(i) The first is a heterogeneous group, often referred with general term “archaic vocal genres”, including incantations, children’s rhymes, herding calls, nature sound imitations, laments, etc. These are usually brief and concise forms and depend closely on the character of a certain activity. Every genre has its own specific means of expression. Archaic vocal genres were performed solo, except wedding laments, which were performed by a group with a leader and a chorus.

(ii) The second group is *regilaul* song, (earlier often translated as “runic song” or “runo song”). Many *regilaul* songs accompany specific activities, like farm work, games, weddings, although there are also songs that can be performed in variable situations, quite irrespective of song content: e.g. as a leisure pastime, handcraft, or while carrying out all kinds of domestic chores. Due to the homogenous meter of all *regilaul* lyrics they are easily adaptable to an arbitrary *regilaul* melody. It was typical for Estonian traditional songs to use only one melody (or two/three melodies) for a long-lasting activity, e.g. a wedding or calendar ritual. These songs were usually performed by a group with a leader and a chorus.

Both song groups have relatively “simple” melodies: the tunes are short, they have a narrow ambitus and stepwise melodic movements; often the pitches are realised in a “loose” and approximate way in performance. The text is the primary aspect and the music mainly follows the build-up of the text in *regilaul* tradition. Songs were performed without any instrumental accompaniment.

Melodies are generally classified by their structure, which is based on text structure and usually correlated with other musical features (ambitus, timbre, method of intonation/singing, etc.). The most important structural constituent of the older folk songs is one line. A regular song line contains 8 syllables and 8 melody notes, each melody note corresponding to one syllable. Normally, a *regilaul* melody extends over one or two verse lines, so the short tune is repeated with every line (one-line melody) or with pair
of lines or line and its repetition (two-line melody), as shown in Examples 1–4. Short refrains may be added to each line in south Estonia (Example 2).


Example 2. One-line refrained melody. A fragment from a flax harvesting song, sung by Elena Jõgi (1889–1982) from Karksi parish.

Example 3. Two-line melody. A fragment from a lyrical song Ära müü möldrile (Do not Sell Me to a Miller), sung by Greete Jents (1884–1985) from Karksi parish.

More specifically regilaul melodies can be distinguished by their contours (Example 5). In this work melody contour is used to characterise the whole melody movement in the case of one-line melodies, and the first melody line in case of two-line melodies, as the second melody line is a typical descending movement or a variation of the first line in most cases. As refrains can vary, they are not considered an essential constituent of melody contour.
An unitary Estonian national culture did not exist until the late 1800s, but rather each region had its dialect and specific melodies (or melody types). Therefore the research material will be restricted to one historical parish, Karksi in south Estonia, for this study. This parish was remarkable for hosting a singing tradition that continued up to the 1960s, but then became virtually extinct. Karksi has an area of 322 km² today. The population diminished during the last century from 7,500 inhabitants in 1881 to 4,300 inhabitants in 2008.

The study focused on 700 folk song melodies, performed by 65 informants, which constitute the greater part of the folk tune material collected from Karksi parish (from 1865 until 1975, supplemented with a few recordings of my own, made in 1995–96). Those 700 melody variants include 275 written notations and 425 sound recordings, made on different kinds of media, including phonograms, gramophone records, audio tapes, digital records and video. Written notations have one or several lyrics attached to them; singers on sound recordings often sing along with the same melody. To analyse word-and-melody relationships, it is necessary to define what a “melody” and a “text” are in oral song tradition.

The regilaul songs are usually not completely fixed entities. Texts and melodies, once sung together, might have no tight one-to-one connections, so melodies could be sung with different lyrics or be loaned from one lyric to another, within some restrictions. Furthermore, both tunes and texts varied in oral transmission, often making it difficult for the researcher to distinguish one entity from another. For the present study, melody and text are defined as a melody type and a text type, insofar as a “type” can be an equivalent of a “piece or entity” in oral tradition. Textual and melodic variants of similar content and structure are grouped together as text types and melody types.

To specify text types I predominantly used the Estonian folk song text typology, published by Ülo Tedre (1969–1974), in which song lyrics are classified according their function and content.

To specify melody types I used the methodology developed by Ingrid Rüütel (Rüütel, Haugas 1990). This method has been successfully applied by researchers working at the Department of Ethnomusicology of the Estonian Literary Museum.

The material on which the research was based was hardly very unified in kind. For example, I found myself comparing transcriptions of single verse lines from the 1800s to longer sound tracks from the 1900s. To make any comparison possible, a common form of notation had to be adopted. Consequently, all the songs were transcribed and transposed to a common basic tone. If the melody of any particular song varied during the performance, its most frequently occurring regular form was selected for analysis.

A melody type is a model representing a group of melody variants that are similar in structure and contour. Melodies with different structures (one-line and two-line melodies) are compared separately.

The rhythm is not a relevant feature in Estonian regilaul melody typology as there are very few rhythmic patterns; most of the songs have the same rhythmic pattern of 8 approximately isochronal metrical units.

The tunes are classified according to the melodic patterns derived from the melodic context, considering the basic tones and the similarities in melody movement. Basic
tones are the most stable tones that do not vary (or vary least) during the process of singing. The final criterion for distinguishing melody types come from specificity of material. To find whether a musical typology makes sense it will be tested against singing tradition. If a typology brings into focus some logic in the usage of tunes, then it is useful (e.g. we can find a correlation between melody types and any other features of the singing tradition).

In the case of the Karksi songs I found that a melody type as an analytical category works best if it is formed of tunes with the same basic tones and at least 6 overlapping tones in their regular form for one-line tunes, and at least 8 overlapping tones for two-line tunes. Table 1 demonstrates that there are correlations between melody types and song functions.

### WORDS-AND-MUSIC RELATIONSHIPS

Among 700 melody variants there were 96 different melody types in the Karksi song material. Lyrics, sung on sound recordings or written down in manuscripts with those melodies, form 781 different text types. It makes on average approximately 8 texts per tune, if the melodic material is spread evenly over the texts. However, the majority of the texts was performed to only a few melody types. In fact, 47 of the 96 melody types occurred only in combination with one text, while 4 melodies featured with no less than 50 different text types. Thus, we can divide melodies into two categories, as one can see in Figure 1. Approximately half of the melodies were combined with 6 per cent of the texts (1st column) while the other half of the music was used with 94 per cent of the texts (2nd column). This second category of songs reveals the phenomenon that a few melodies are used with many different lyrics.

![Figure 1. Text-melody relationships in old folk songs from Karksi. Approximately one half of the melodies were combined with 6 per cent of the texts (1st column), while the other half of the music was used with 94 per cent of the texts (2nd column).](chart.png)
It is quite clear from the previous section that some melodies had been used with several lyrics in the Estonian singing tradition. In the 19th century different local singing traditions existed in Estonia, with every locality having its own subtly different ways to attach melodies to lyrics. To outline some trends of regional singing traditions, reciprocal correlations between melodies and texts were found at the boundaries of parishes. In addition to computing correlations between text types and melody types, correlations were computed for more general subdivisions made on the basis of melodic features (melody structure and contour) on the one hand and functional song genres (categorised on two levels) on the other, at the boundaries of Karksi parish (Table 1, for more details see Särg 2000).

Table 1. Correlation indexes ($r$) were computed for melody types, melody structures and melody contours on the one hand, and song genres on the other. Correlation indexes of more than 1 let us suppose that features are conditional on each other, while an index close to 1 refers to a tendency for two phenomena to occur together. Only correlations above 0.75 are written into the table, so empty cells indicate a correlation index less than 0.75.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>genre / function</th>
<th>melody contour</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>melody structure</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>melody type</th>
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<td>archaic vocal genres</td>
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<td>1(1) 1(4)</td>
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<td>0.89</td>
<td>1-line</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>5R(1) 6R(1)</td>
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<td>0.99</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1-line+R</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>5R(1) 6R(1)</td>
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<td>1-line+R</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>5R(1) 6R(1)</td>
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<td>2-line+R</td>
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<td>1R(2) 10R(2) 11R(2)</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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<td>1-line+R</td>
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<td>4 7</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>2-line</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>4.2(2) 4.3(2) 5(2) 7(2)</td>
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<td>(lyro)epics</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 7</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>2-line</td>
<td>1.26</td>
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As we can see from the Table 1, functional context influences the choice of melodic features. For example, harvest songs, some calendar songs, wedding songs, etc., favour one (or some) specific melody type(s). Both regilaul genres that do not directly depend on activity, i.e. lyrics and lyroepics, to some extent use the same melody types and
structures. The songs, associated with specific works and rituals, have old one-line refrain melodies (Example 2); the songs not connected to any specific activity (lyroepic and lyric songs) have two-line refrainless melodies (Examples 3 and 4), characterised by more modern melodic features compared to one-line melodies. This result is in good accordance with earlier investigations on south Estonian folk tune structures that affirm the regilaul songs associated with specific works and rituals are very old by their function, content and tune (Tampere 1956b; 1964; Rüütel 1997). Traditional ritual context probably helped to maintain archaic features through the 1800s.

Some melody contours (marked with 1, 4, 5) pervade different melodic structures and serve as basic musical themes. Reciprocal herding calls (helletused) have a high correlation to specific descending contour 1 (r=1.48, Table 1), forming different structures. The same contour is recognisable in some incantations and children’s songs. This kind of melodic unity can be interpreted as ‘monothematism’ in Schimmelpenninck’s (1997) terms.

To provide an example, let us look at two specific melody types, marked 4R(1) and 4.2(2) in Table 1 above, which represent the major distinction in melodic structures found in old south Estonian folk songs.

Melody type 4R(1) and the first melody line of type 4.2(2) have a similar melodic pitch contour, but different structure, indicated by a number in brackets. Melody contour, marked with figure 4, refers to a single ascending-descending melodic curve with culmination on the 3rd note (Example 5).

The melody 4R(1) has the length of a single line (Example 2). Every line is followed by a refrain that usually consists of one or two words. Type 4R(1) is one of the most frequently occurring melody types in Karksi. In the archived material, we found 54 song variants for this melody, sung by 12 performers. In 47 instances these melodies here are associated with specific seasonal group activities – the melody appears 19 times in harvest songs and 28 times in calendar ritual songs. Songs of this kind may have had magical connotations, but they also served as entertainment.


The other melody type 4.2(2) has a different structure: it consists of two different melody lines extending to two verse lines (Example 4), but the first melody line has a characteristic ascending-descending curve. This melody has been documented by 19 texts.
from 11 informants. The majority of these texts (16 items) have no specific connection with ritual activities; primarily they reflect the life of women and girls, which is hardly surprising, because at the time when these songs were recorded, most singers of Estonian regilaul songs were women. Five of the texts are about the act of singing, while four texts consider the relationship between girls and boys and marriage.

Example 5. Widespread melody contour in Karksi, marked in tune typology with number 4 (cf. Examples 2 and 4).

Both mono- and polyfunctional tune types can be described as context related, i.e. the choice of melody strongly depends on the character of people’s activity. A lyroepic song Venna sõjalugu (The Brother’s War Tale) is usually sung a with two-line melody in Karksi. However, if the same text is used for prolongation of a game song Telu tegemine (Making Telu), it is sung to one-line refrained game song melody.20 “Specific” melodies, connected to only one (or some specific) lyrics, differ from “polyfunctional” and “monofunctional” melodies. “Specific” melodies are text related, as the choice of melody depends first on lyrics and does not change with context.21 Those songs belong to the more recent singing tradition.

SINGER

Estonian folklore collectors write that singers know many verses, but sing them to very few melodies. Folk music collector, Juhan Aavik, who would later go on to become a composer, has written:

Here is a good “harvest” of the firsts [=lyrics] – but few of the seconds [=melodies], because regiverses for wedding, horse herding, pasturing, etc., have almost the same tunes – excluding variants. (Tampere 1935: 14)

Another collector, August Kiiss wrote in 1908 in his diary:

The host of Lapardi farmstead who sang us a lot of lyrics, used principally one tune. (EÜS V 180)

There were no professional singers in the Estonian rural community. Most of them were farmers, and rather poor people. Some singers were considered to be better than others and they were often asked to sing at communal events, especially at weddings. Regilaul singers used a few of melodies for their entire repertoire, usually one or two local melodies for each function, learned from their relatives and village people. Estonian peasants lived for a long time as sedentary people, so they got little information from outside their communities.

The most ancient characteristics of a good regilaul singer are found in song lyrics. Several text types are about singing.22 There is no direct notion about musical abilities (e.g. about singing complicated melodies, carrying a tune well, creating melodies,
knowing many melodies), but a singer’s skill to (re)create lyrics, her/his large repertoire of words, magical power and a good (loud, resounding) voice are pointed to in lyrics.

A wonderful voice is often described as *hele* (bright, magnisonant), *kume* (resounding), *hõbedane* (silvery), while good singing is characterised with onomatopoetic words *laksuma* (to slap),23 *kukkuma* (to cuckoo),24 *paukuma* (to bang) (Tedre 1969: 100, 105, 116, 123, 125). Very typical are verses in which a singer vaunts that everybody will listen to her, the war will stop, the sea changes into the earth, etc.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Laulan ma mere mâeksa}, & \quad \text{I will sing a sea into a mountain}, \\
\text{merekivi killingaks!} & \quad \text{A sea stone into a shilling!} \\
\text{Ärä ma seie-ks lõo lõõri}, & \quad \text{I ate up a lark’s warbling,} \\
\text{ää seie kure kurgu} – & \quad \text{I ate up a crane’s throat} – \\
\text{selle mul eks mul hääle heledäp}, & \quad \text{Therefore my voice is brighter} \\
\text{kurk selle kumedap.} & \quad \text{My throat is more resounding.}
\end{align*}
\]

Text type *Ma laulan mere maaksi* (I will Sing the Sea into the Earth), Hargla parish. (Tedre 1969: 115)

Singers boast about their great repertoire and can even offer to lend words to other singers.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nõnda on minul sõnuda}, & \quad \text{I have so many words} \\
\text{kui neid uusida ubeda,} & \quad \text{As new beans,} \\
\text{keedetuida herne’eida,} & \quad \text{As boiled grean peas,} \\
\text{lülittida pähkelaida.} & \quad \text{As hulled hazelnuts.} \\
\text{Koju jütsin kotitäie,} & \quad \text{I left home a sackful [of words],} \\
\text{mäha matsin mattitäie,} & \quad \text{Buried a matful,} \\
\text{kivi alla kerstutäie,} & \quad \text{Under the stone a chestful,} \\
\text{ahjule halli vaiba täie,} & \quad \text{On the oven a grey-rugful,} \\
\text{parsile palakatäie.} & \quad \text{On the ceiling boards a sheetful.} \\
\text{Koasa töön ma karbitäie,} & \quad \text{I took with me a boxful,} \\
\text{koasa karbikoanetäie.} & \quad \text{A box-coverful.}
\end{align*}
\]

Text type *Palju sõnu* (Many Words), Väike-Maarja parish. (Tedre 1969: 119)

The opposite is true of melodies, about which very little is said, and if it happens, then it is probably caused by poetic language. Namely, when “song” (*laul*) is used in a main verse line, then “tune” (*viis*) often appears in a parallel lines as a poetic synonym for a song. It also might be that “song” mainly means lyrics, and “tune” means melodies, to combine to produce a consistent picture of a whole song.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Küll om laulu, kui ma lasen,} & \quad \text{There is much singing, when I let it go,} \\
\text{küll viisi, kui veeretan!} & \quad \text{There is much melody, when I let it roll!}
\end{align*}
\]

Text type *Palju laulu* (Many Songs), Viljandi parish. (Tedre 1969: 121)

But sometimes a singer really can talk about having many melodies, as in the next example. Each district had their own melodies (sometimes overlapping) and a singer who had roamed around a little and visited different parishes really could have more tunes.
Usually the number of melodies depended on the number of song genres that a singer used. For example, the singer Greete Jents (1893–1975) from Karksi parish, who had learned singing tradition mainly from her grandmother and mother, both known as great singers, had a limited number of melodies. There are 71 old folk song variants recorded from her in the Estonian Folklore Archives, including repetitive recordings of some songs. Greete Jents uses approximately 12 separate melody types and 31 separate text types; 12 melody types include 5 group melodies and 7 special melodies. She uses group melodies for the following song groups (one melody type for each point): (1) lyroepic and lyric songs, also herding songs of lyrical character, (2) older calendar songs (Shrove Tuesday, swinging, St. John’s game) and a harvest song, (3) wedding songs, (4) game songs, (5) children’s songs, (6) speech-like intonations: incantations, imitations of birdsong. Greete Jents uses special melodies for the following songs: (7) a local herding call (Helletus), (8) a more recent melody for the St. Martin’s Day mumming, (9–12) four different songs (a flax plucking song, a lyric song and two lyroepic songs).

Greete Jents sings 25 variants from 10 text types (i.e. approximately one third of her recordings) to her favourite melody type (see Example 3). She says about those songs: “They all have the same tone”. Two of her melody types (points 7, 8) can also be called monofunctional in Karksi. Special tunes, sung by Greete Jents, have also been recorded by other singers who use the same melody. They have more recent melodic character and were probably adapted from Estonian neighbours in the last centuries.

**TUNE DEVELOPMENT**

In the older regilaul tradition melody was orally transmitted and called to mind by memory, rather than consciously composed. Folk singers do not talk about creating melodies but explain changes in tune traditions as the “emerging” or “coming” of a new melody. For example, Peeter Sild from Karksi parish said that a more modern melody for mumming songs came in about 1895 from Peraküla village, close to the Latvian border. Composing melodies was also rare in the later end-rhymed song tradition. We can suppose that some new melodies developed through subtle changes in existing tunes, and that some of them had been borrowed or adapted from neighbours. South Estonian refrained regilaul melodies refer to a southern influence, as similar structures are much used in Slavic and Baltic folk songs, although neither in north Estonian nor Finnish-Karelian songs.

When a singer needed a new melody she/he obviously adapted it from another song. If there is talk about composing, it is merely about song lyrics. For example, folk singer Elena Animägi was once asked to make a song for the anniversary of a local collective farm named “Karksi”. Elena told a folklore collector: “The chairman left, I started to
cook porridge, while stirring porridge with a wooden spoon I thought up song lyrics.”\(^{31}\) (Särg 2008: 91) Elena did not create a melody, but used a traditional folk dance \textit{polka} tune. Another example relates to the innovation of an old incantation by folk singer Anna Evert. Incantations were traditionally performed with speech-like intonation and rigid rhythm, but Anna Evert probably did not like that archaic method of intonation. She had adapted a weather incantation \textit{Tule välja, Päevakene!} (Sun, Come Out!), to two different melodies: to a wedding tune and to a \textit{helletus}, a special herding tune (ibid.: 97).

The function of melody is obvious by its contour and function-related refrain \textit{kaske}, in the case of wedding songs, and characteristic melody type in the case of a \textit{helletus}.

The way of acquiring songs is discussed in \textit{regilaul} lyrics, especially in certain song types.\(^{32}\) According to \textit{regilaul} lyrics, song texts can be composed by different people (e.g. children, boys), and also figuratively forged by a smith (ibid.: 137).

Characteristic are questions and assumptions about the method of a song’s acquisition, followed by the singer’s answers. One of the main logical assumptions is that the songstress has been to different counties to learn many songs. However, the latter usually answers that she got the songs at a wedding, at work or even learned them from birds (see examples below). This figurative speech indirectly refers to (re)creation. Again, melodies are mentioned in parallel lines as synonyms for songs or lyrics, and tunes.

\textit{[...]} see käind Arjus õppimasse,  
\textit{Virus viisi võttemas}.  
\textit{[...]} ma’p käind Arjus õppimasse,  
\textit{Virus viisi võttemas}.  
\textit{Ära mina ütlen selle koha,}  
\textit{kus ma need lood luges(in),}  
\textit{kus ma viisid veeratasing} –  
\textit{aru eina niitessägi,}  
\textit{luhus loogu võttesag(i),}  
\textit{kurus kuhja luuessägi,}  
\textit{kodo kangasta kudud}.  

Text type \textit{Kust laulud saadud}. (From Where Songs Came), Kuusalu parish. (Tampere et al. 2003: 144)

In some song variants the opinion that the melody existed beforehand, and a singer acquired the lyrics, is expressed.

\textit{[Eit/taat viis mind pulma,]}  
\textit{juot mind laulige kabasta,}  
\textit{pillipuhuja piekerista –}  
\textit{sield mina laulule ladusin,}  
\textit{sanad viiisle vedäsin.}  
\textit{Lu’ud mina luuasta arutin,}  
\textit{sanad haui hambaasta}.  

Text type \textit{Pulmades laulikuks saanud} (I Became a Singer at Weddings), Kuusalu parish. (Tampere 1938: 121)
Terms

Regilaul melodies are designated by the native terms toon (tone, tune), viis (tune), (h)ääl (voice), mõnu (joy), etc. (see Tampere 1956a: 12; Rüütel 1999: 92). Both toon and viis are probably loans from Middle High German ( tôn, dôn; wīse) and also mean the way of acting, intoning (Duden 1989); viis is more often used for more modern end-rhymed folk song layers. Hääl sometimes occurs in regilaul texts as a parallel word for “lyrics”, and as “words/tune” form a typical word pair, “tune” can be merged to some extent there.

Text type Kust laulud saadud (From Where Songs Came), Kuusalu parish. (Rüütel 1994: 6)

In following example “words” in the main verse line is juxtaposed with “tunes” in the parallel line, to give a wider picture of the song. The expression meel motles “mind thought” can mean various mental processes in Estonian, including creation, recreation and recollection.

[...] suu mul säiedles sõnuda,
meel motles viisikesi.

My mouth set words,
My mind thought tunes.

Text type Kust laulud saadud (From Where Songs Came), Viljandi parish. (Tedre 1969: 107)

Regilaul persistently changed in oral tradition and can jointly represent fragments of archaic and modern thinking. In the late 1800s the first Estonian composers started to compose choir songs, therefore some lyrics can represent quite recent creative input into music creation.

TERMS

Regilaul melodies are designated by the native terms toon (tone, tune), viis (tune), (h)ääl (voice), mõnu (joy), etc. (see Tampere 1956a: 12; Rüütel 1999: 92). Both toon and viis are probably loans from Middle High German ( tôn, dôn; wīse) and also mean the way of acting, intoning (Duden 1989); viis is more often used for more modern end-rhymed folk song layers. Hääl sometimes occurs in regilaul texts as a parallel word for “lyrics”, and as “words/tune” form a typical word pair, “tune” can be merged to some extent there.

Text type Lauljaid otsitakse (Searching For Singers), Karksi parish. (Tampere 1941: 144)

Vernacular terms for certain types of melodies are usually generic terms, referring to a song’s function, e.g. kiigetoon (swinging tune) and karjatoon (herding tune) in north Estonia. The folklore collector Gustav Vilberg (Vilbaste) recorded in his diary from Kuusalu parish in 1911 that in addition to functional genres there are also special men’s tunes. This could refer to the fact that other song genres were sung by women.

A similar variety of melodies [as of lyrics] is not found. Almost everywhere one meets the following “tunes”: the swinging tune, the wedding tune, the herding tune, the men’s tune and the game tune. These tunes are not absolutely the same
in each village, and while the differences are often subtle, they can also be greater, e.g. the swinging tune in Tappurla village is very different from the swinging tune used in Virve village. (EÜS VIII 1238/9)

In south Estonia several generic terms have developed from characteristic function-related refrain words, e.g. kaasitus (wedding song with refrain words kaasike, kaske, kaske-kanke, etc.), leesitus (harvesting song with üles, üle-(h)es-les-les, etc.), helletus, öletus (special reciprocal herding calls with (h)ella, ölle, etc.). Those terms were used to derive designations for melodies, e.g. kaasitusviis (tune of wedding songs). When folk singer Anna Evert discussed what melody to choose, she characterised tunes with terms like kaasiteme (verb “to sing with kaske”) and ellatamine (substantive “singing with herding call melody”), derived from context-related refrains. Sometimes generic terms, especially terms for wedding songs (kaasitused, pulmalaulud), were generalised to designate all local regilaul songs in recent tradition (Rüütel 1999: 91; Särg 2008: 48).

Ingrid Rüütel has pointed out that the native term for a “song”, laul, is used only for pieces with poetic text and well-formed musical structure. For example, although the herding calls (helletused) have musically developed melodies, they have never been called “songs” by folk singers as they had quite short and simple lyrics (Rüütel 1997: 40; 1999: 95).

**REGILAUL SINGERS ABOUT WORDS-AND-MELODY RELATIONSHIP TODAY**

An unbroken regilaul tradition has survived only in some peripheral districts, such as Kihnu island and Setomaa, and also in the Seto diaspora in Siberia today, although singing contexts are changing everywhere. In village communities old cultural traditions are now being taken over by local folklore groups. The traditional way of improvising lyrics is to some extent still alive. Interesting memories about regilaul singing were recorded among Siberian Setos during fieldwork in 2008. One of the collectors, folklorist Andreas Kalkun, has concluded that Siberian Setos distinguish between two basically different singing traditions: on the one hand, the Seto regilaul tradition with neither definite lyrics nor a strophic structure, and on the other hand, Estonian and Russian end-rhymed songs with fixed, strophic, lyrics. In the Siberian Setos’ opinion only the latter can be called (ordinary) songs. They say that the Seto regilaul singing tradition does not include songs as fixed entities, but singing means that “words are being gathered to the tune”. That is, in ritual contexts women created many song lyrics to a traditional tune, probably compiling formulaic motifs and their own improvisations. Old women told folklore collectors about long-lasting singing sessions at weddings, herding and funerals, etc. (Kalkun, Sibul 2008) For example, this fragment from a dialogue:

Semmeni Olli: We had a sister All’a, she started a random song at a wedding and then sang [the same song] all through the wedding. She had many words.
Kopa Manni: Kunaski Nati also had many words, once when we stayed at the night quarters, she was running the same tune throughout the whole God’s night, and those words, where she gathered them from. (ERA, DV 640, 9:20–10:40)
A contemporary famous folk song improviser among Estonian Setos, Kukka Mari, sings all her songs to some well known local tunes: “Mari sings all her thoughts to party tunes, some of them to a longer, some to a shorter tune, depending on which fits better” (Sarv 2004: 52–53).

Apart from a few remnants of old regilaul tradition in countryside, there is a powerful folk song revival all over Estonia. Several folklore groups started their activity in the 1970s. Their music was mainly revived from folk song publications that have been compiled on the basis of archived sources, but partly learned from oral tradition in countryside. As a result of their activity, many completely forgotten folk songs and games became very popular in towns and spread in oral tradition, especially the melodies. Today a secondary tradition includes both staged performances and spontaneous group singing.

It was interesting to know if a tendency to use only a few melodies occurs in contemporary oral regilaul tradition. My own presupposition was that folklore groups, performing on the stage, have to entertain audiences and cannot be very monotonous, as contemporary people prefer variety in music. Therefore a staged program usually comprises melodies of different character, i.e. songs from different districts and different genres and/or do not last too long. Similarly, a music CD of a folklore group never contains two songs with the same melody.

But what happens at spontaneous group singing, also called singing in its primary function (Klusen 1986)? To get more information, I took part in singing occasions and interviewed some contemporary famous folk singers. Sometimes singers compiled and improvised song lyrics during the singing session.

Regilaul group singing can be fully spontaneous (e.g. at afterparties) or organised events (called “regilaul room” or “nest”) where some good folk singers are invited. In live regilaul singing, one person has the role of a leader and she or he sings verses, repeated by others. All participants can act as leader by turns, or anyone who has a good idea for the next verse or next song, can continue. Once an improvisation starts, the melody does not change. It is also quite possible that during one singing occasion several songs can be sung to one melody.

Among contemporary regilaul singers we find many young people without musical education, so they cannot read and write musical notes. Moreover, some of them are so fascinated with oral transmission that they basically do not use writing at all, even for learning long song lyrics or remembering their own improvisations. Singers have discovered regilaul for themselves in different ways, e.g. they have experienced an impressive song performance by relatives or friends who are active in the folklore movement. Often they are people who like music but are without academic musical training.

One of the most appreciated regilaul singers is Lauri Öunapuu (born in 1979) in Tallinn, a leader of the Arhailise Meestelaulu Selts (Society of Traditional Male Singing) and a member of a very popular ethno-rock band Metsatöll. Many people appreciate him highly as a powerful transmitter of our “ancestors’ voices and ancient memories” (Öunapuu 2007). He tried to learn classical guitar in childhood, but gave it up because of an angry teacher. So he started to play several instruments on his own. His folk music interest increased step by step, influenced by the atmosphere of the Estonian national movement in the 1990s, ethnic music in films, folklore concerts and his grandparents’ songs in Viljandi county. He works as an IT specialist, composes songs, plays different folk instruments and sings (Sommer 2006; Õunapuu 2007).
Lauri said that he has quite a few tunes compared to the number of texts. He learns melodies by ear, but has also used a computer program: “I mainly hear [melodies] from other singing people. I have quite a few tunes compared to songs, the most part [of my lyrics] I sing to one-two-three tunes.”

Lauri can quickly remember lyrics, he knows all his large repertory by heart and in principle does not use written texts. However, he often records musical ideas using a dictaphone (Mägi 2006). Lauri mentioned that it is better not to use too many different melodies. Firstly because it is much easier for him to remember and (re)create song lyrics than melodies. Secondly, in singing situations it would be easier both for a leader and a choir to sing to a limited number of tunes.

Sometimes he has been asked to create songs for festivities, e.g. for Queen Elizabeth’s greeting in Tallinn in 2006. In such cases he creates only the song lyrics and uses some of his favourite tunes. Lauri said that if he had a separate melody for each set of lyrics he would write it down. He admitted that some people disdain this kind of singing:

I know, it is said about me, that I sing very poorly, in a dragging and boring way, but those people like very to rap all songs up quickly, so I don’t think of my songs as being poor, it depends on people’s taste.

Both, traditional and contemporary regilaul singers sometimes forget the tune under the influence of a previous tune and – consciously or unconsciously – continue singing with the same melody. The experienced regilaul singer Kadri Kukk (born in 1893) from Karksi, rarely changed melody during long recording sessions in the 1960s and 1970s. There are song lyrics recorded by her with two or three different melodies, depending more on the previous melody than on the character of the song. All songs tended to be given similar melodies if sung in the same context, i.e. when she was interviewed by the folklorists.

Contemporary singers also told me how easy it is to forget a well-prepared melody under the influence of previous songs. Ülle Paltser (born in Tallinn) has learned songs from childhood in the Leegajus folklore group and is now a leader of the Sinimaniseele folklore group in Tartu. She said at one of the singing sessions:

I have often experienced that I had just listened to a song recording, then I sang this song the whole way, but if I had got to a repetition, I opened my mouth and another tune came out! […] It often happens that you start to sing the tune of the previous song. (ERA, DH 106)

CONCLUSIONS

In this article some characteristic aspects of Estonian singing culture were analysed, which appear at first as the abundance of lyrics and scarcity of melodies. A similar phenomenon has been described in different musical cultures and I supposed that it could be universal for oral music traditions. The research was mainly based on materials from the Estonian Folklore Archives and interviews with contemporary folk singers.

Old Estonian folk songs were combinations of melody and text that emerged during performance following the local singing tradition. Old folk songs include regilaul with a homogeneous metre, performed by a leader and a chorus, and some other archaic vocal
genres, performed solo. The text was usually the primary aspect and the music existed as a traditional mode of uttering metrically and poetically structured lyrics, often closely related to singing context. The main task of a singer was to (re)create or improvise lyrics, fitting them into the context. Song texts with the same or similar functions tended to be performed with the same melody (or similar melodies), which were orally transmitted in local tradition. So it happened that the regilaul tradition operated with a bulk of lyrics and a handful of melodies.

An unitary Estonian culture did not exist until the late 1800s, although every region had its subtle differences. Word-and-melody relationships and context-and-melody relationships have been analysed in the singing tradition of Karksi parish. Statistical analyses of the 700 song variants demonstrated that approximately half of the melodies were combined with 6 per cent of the texts. The main difference emerged between context-related and text-related melodies, i.e. there are older general tunes whose usage depended on context (they can be used in one or several functional contexts, and the same lyrics can be sung with different melodies in different contexts), and slightly newer specific tunes, used with certain lyrics. Among context-related tunes monofunctional and polyfunctional melodies can be distinguished, used in one or several song genres, although they have no strict separation.

Regilaul singers used a few melodies for their entire repertoire, usually one/two local melodies for each function plus some specific tunes learned from their relatives and village people. Singer Greete Jents from Karksi parish has sung approximately one third of her recordings to her favourite melody type. Folklore collectors wrote that singers know many verses, but sing them to very few melodies.

Regilaul lyrics about singing let us suppose that singers did not pay much attention to melodies. Singers’ musical abilities (e.g. singing complicated melodies, carrying a tune well, creating melodies, knowing many melodies) are not directly mentioned, but their skill to (re)create lyrics, and her/his magical power and a good (usually loud, resounding) voice are pointed out. Folk singers did not talk about creating melodies, but in interviews explained changes in tune traditions as the “emerging” or “coming” of a new melody. When a singer needed a new melody she/he obviously adapted it from another song. Regilaul lyrics about song creation do not distinguish clearly between the composition of lyrics and tunes. In some variants the opinion is expressed that a melody existed before a singer acquired the lyrics.

Estonian vernacular terms for melodies (or melody types) are mainly generic terms referring to a song’s function, e.g. “swinging tone” (kiigetoon).

Contemporary Estonian regilaul singers without musical education who (re)create and improvise songs, say it is easier to sing all lyrics to a few melodies than to have a different melody for each song text. Both traditional and contemporary regilaul singers sometimes forgot the melody when under the influence of the previous melody and consciously or unconsciously continued singing with the same melody. If singers start to improvise lyrics in spontaneous singing situation today, they do not change a melody.

Research into the melody-and-words relationship in Estonian folk songs demonstrates that quite a low number of context-related melodies that were not consciously created were in circulation. Singers’ creative powers were probably centred on song lyrics. The main task of a singer was to (re)create or improvise lyrics for communal singing. As it would be quite impossible to have both complicated lyrics and melodies without a written notation system, the music had to be simple (cf. Nettl 1964: 201).
This result supports a hypothesis that the scarcity of melodies can be characteristic or even universal for text-centred oral music cultures, as it facilitates text (re)creation. If a group of people wished to express themselves together and with emotional power in different conditions using memorised and recreated texts, then the best way was to sing it to a ready tune. The Estonian peasant singing tradition developed in a manner that fulfilled those conditions.

NOTES

1 Translations here and below by the author.
2 “Tune” can mean a particular “melody shape” or more generally a variable “melodic framework” here (Schimmelpenninck 1997: 226).
3 The book is edited and to some extent co-authored by Frank Kouwenhoven (Shimmelpenninck 1997: xiv).
4 Folk song anthologies do not reflect the usage of melodies in real singing tradition, but offer various possible tunes for contemporary people. Of course, the wider variety of melodies is preferred by folklore groups and composers searching for (raw) material for their performances and compositions.
5 End-rhymed strophic songs emerged under the influence of European music and were usually performed outside the ritual context as entertainment.
6 The contents of songs were closely related to an activity, so the Estonian generic classification of folk songs is based on the function and content of song lyrics. The main song genres are connected to works, calendar rituals, family rituals, games and activities with children. The majority of songs, unrelated to a certain activity, is classified by their content as lyroepics and lyrical.
7 Most songs have been recorded from a single singer without a chorus as the regilaul singing tradition had almost perished by the period of active folklore collection. Therefore, verse repetition is quite rare in Karksi sound recordings, especially in the case of one-line refrainless regilaul melodies (Example 1). As far as is known via sound recordings and memories, various refrained melodies (Example 2) and two-line refrainless melodies (Examples 3, 4) were used for communal singing with a leader and a chorus in Karksi.
8 More rare in the regilaul tradition are three- and more-line tunes.
9 RKM, Mgn II 385 b, recorded by Herbert Tampere in 1960.
10 RKM, Mgn II 1767 e, recorded by Ingrid Rüütel and Olli Kõiva in 1970 (Särg 2008: 339).
11 RKM, Mgn II 551 b, recorded by Herbert Tampere and Selma Lätt in 1961 (Särg 2008: 249).
12 The parish was the main unit of administrative division and its borders had coincided with cultural areas in Estonia since ancient times. The parish is divided into townships that comprised several villages.
13 It is supposed in Estonian folk song study that a transcription, made in fieldwork, can represent a generalisation of several melodic variants, sung by an informant.
14 It is often unclear whether the singer sang all her/his lyrics to the same melody or the melody was sung once (or several times) and then additional lyrics were dictated, referring to the melody.
15 Every individual researcher may make somewhat different choices, relying on the experience of our research group in analysing regilaul melodies. Usually, at first several attempts are made using slightly different criteria for distinguishing melody types.
16 The number of different text types is somewhat greater than the number of melody variants, because some melody variants were used for several text types. Sometimes many lyrics were compiled by the singer in a way that made it difficult to decide if there are one or more songs.
The empirical frequency of both features occurring together was divided by the theoretical frequency of their occurring together. The theoretical frequency was computed using the following formula: \( \frac{n_1 \times n_2}{n_1 + n_2} \), where \( n_1 \) and \( n_2 \) stand for the occurrence of each feature.

18 Sung by Marie Helimets from Karksi, RKM, Mgn II 624 a, c, d (Särg 2008: 135–137, 139).
19 RKM, Mgn II 540 a, recorded by Herbert Tampere in 1961 (Särg 2008: 330).
20 Sung by Mai Mölder from Karksi, RKM, Mgn II 587 j.

As intermediate form between “special” melody and “group”, “polyfunctional”, “general” melody are some “semispecial” melodies, used with a few lyrics of similar structure, e.g. songs with the vat-luuli refrain, which have developed as later variants from archaic regilaul text types such as Tilluke teopoiss (Little Serf), Hollandi sulane (The Netherlands’ Farmhand) and Loomine (The Song of World Creation).

22 Text types Ei mind jõua ohjad hoida (Reins cannot Hold Me), Küla jääb kuulama (the Village will Listen to Me), Metsamurd (Forest Break), Hea hääl (Good Voice) and Hääde hääl (Feeble Voice) (Tedre 1969: 97–167).
23 Laksu(ta)ma – verb, derived from onomatopoetic word laks (slap, clap) stands inter alia for nightingale’s singing.
24 Kukkuma – verb, derived from onomatopoetic word kuk(k)u (cuckoo).
25 Some of those melodies (points 6–8) can alternatively be regarded as being monofunctional tunes that tend to become rather special, e.g. the mumming song melody is in principle related to a St. Martin’s or St. Catherine’s Day context, but it is always used with the same lyrics.

26 Text types Lina katkudes sain märjaks (I got drenched While Plucking Flax), Ema ja armud (Mother and Loves), Tilluke teopoiss (A Little Farm Fand) and Venna sõjalugu (The Brother’s War Tale).
27 RKM II 273, 635, written by Olli Kõiva in 1970 (Särg 2008: 177).
28 In more detail, melody (8) is also used for St. Catherine’s Day mumming two weeks later, but the customs of both holidays are very similar.
29 For example, the melody of a lyric song Ema ja armud (Mother and Loves) has Latvian origin (Goldin 1977: 131–134).
30 RKM II 87, 627 (5, 6), written by Herbert and Erna Tampere in 1960.
31 RKM II 94, 645/6, written by Olli Kõiva in 1960.
32 Text types Kust laulud saadud (From where songs have come), Pulmades laulikuks saanud (I became a singer at weddings) and Laulud tööl õpitud (I learned my songs at work) (Tedre 1969: 111).
33 Anna Evert asks: “Whether I have to sing refrain kaske or ella in between verses?” RKM, Mgn II 615 k, 1961 (Särg 2008: 101).
34 Here and below is quoted my phone interview with Lauri Õunapuu 2008.

SOURCES

ERA – Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum.
ERA, DH – Collection of digital sound recordings.
ERA, DV – Collection of digital video recordings.
EÜS – Manuscript collection of the Estonian Student Society.
RKM II – Manuscript collection of the State Literary Museum.
RKM, Mgn II – Collection of sound recordings on open-reel tapes of the State Literary Museum.
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REFUGE OR RESOURCE: HOME AND NOSTALGIA IN POSTSOCIALIST ESTONIA

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ABSTRACT
The focus of this article is on nostalgia as it appears in the representations of home-decoration in postsocialist Estonia. This theme is explored, describing a dialogue and conflict between different versions of relating to the past. The empirical material comprises qualitatively analysed in-depth interviews and articles in home-decoration journals from 1997–2008. Examining some dimensions and mechanisms of nostalgia in this specific context enables to demonstrate how is transformation from Soviet everyday culture into Western consumer culture conceptualised through ideas about the home. I will suggest that in Estonian everyday life nostalgia is not only a form of escapism into the past from the uncertain present and identity problems, but it also works as a resource to cope with the traumatic past, negotiate and forge new identities.

KEYWORDS: home • postsocialism • nostalgia • consumption • heritage

INTRODUCTION
All through human history and culture the dwelling has been a complex of images that offer proofs or illusions of stability to a human being. It is one of the central integrators of a man’s thoughts, memories and dreams (Bachelard 1999: 54). In contemporary Western world the home has remained an important arena that mirrors the interplay between society and individual, it is a way of organising everyday life and privacy. A home can be seen as social practice – it brings together the levels of ideology and everyday. Aesthetics, moral and politics meet in the dwelling (Saarikangas 1993: 30, 439). At the same time home is a focus of modern folk culture and mass consumption as a place for creativity and self-expression. Creating a home is increasingly closely connected with the creation of identity (Löfgren 1990a: 32).

Soviet society was based on the profound reconfiguration of domestic relations, the individual, the home and daily life as part of a larger demiurgic process of social reform. For Soviet ideology, the sphere of daily life and, in particular, the home, was the arena in which this fundamental restructuring of society was thought through and materialised (Buchli 2002: 210–211). Therefore, it can be also be seen as a key analytical context for understanding social change in postsocialist societies.

There are numerous studies that examine the rapid transformation processes in the Estonian political and economic fields. In the field of media studies, cultural sociology
and consumption some remarkable contributions have been published over the past few years (Lauristin 1997; 2004; Aarelaı̈d 1999; Aarelaı̈d-Tart 2001; Keller 2004). However, the relationship between social changes and the formation of new everyday culture has not been adequately studied yet. This article first provides a theoretical discussion on the relationship between domestic objects, memory and nostalgia. Secondly, it will describe the background for the situation in which diverse new identities and lifestyles started to take shape in the 1990s in Estonia. The article then proceeds to an empirical analysis of some more distinctive conceptions of home decoration that shed light on the different interpretations and functions of nostalgia.

MEMORY, OBJECTS AND NOSTALGIA

The domestic environment can be looked at as a constant signifying process in which temporality and spatiality are closely bound together. As people relate themselves to the environment, this takes place on many levels, but here especially the time level is in the focus of attention. Time is layered in the domestic space and so it becomes a carrier or witness of past times. But history is reflected only through the memories and interpretations of the inhabitants.

Objects serve as guideposts to orient the individual in, and personalise, both space and time. It is possible to examine nostalgia in everyday life through recollections concerning objects, since they carry along with them memories and personal histories. The object thus becomes the site of recollection, an expression of an individual and/or collective past (Korkiakangas 2004: 122). The narratives about artefacts demonstrate how their owners think about the connection between the past and the present. Their use sheds light on the relation between cultural continuity and change. Here personal history and the history of the nation are intertwined. According to ethnologist Ene Kõresaar life history interviews can help to open the symbolic aspect of an object. In case of a life story, the intimate importance of a thing to its user is essential, but in a wider context – on the level of life history, things express special relations that rule between life and society, different social and cultural practices in the community (Kõresaar 1998).

Things structure the life-course not only in biographical interviews or memoirs, but we can also find other forms of representation – family albums, collections of souvenirs, memorabilia or pictures on the wall. We can speak about the ability of things to condensate cultural knowledge (Löfgren 1990b: 201, 204).

Memory often appears in the form of nostalgia. Through objects nostalgia can be directed towards, on the one hand, very individual memories and sensations, on the other the emphasis can also be weighted towards the utility and practicality of objects that were formerly perceived to be clumsy and old-fashioned. For example, the non-modern may become desirable and modern when transferred into a new cultural context (Löfgren 1990b). Peasant culture may be adapted to what is seen as modern and contemporary. Objects can activate memories associated with varied atmospheres and feelings and can even appear as representations of a bygone era. Images of things develop into signs or symbols of a kind of communal identity such as that of the rural idyll.

The concept of nostalgia was coined in the 17th century, meaning a kind of severe homesickness. By the 19th century, a considerable semantic slippage had occurred and
the word began to lose its purely medical meaning – it gradually became less a physical than a psychological condition. What made the transition possible was a shift from the spatial to the temporal. Nostalgia was no longer simply a yearning to return home. Already in 1798 Immanuel Kant had noted that people who did return home were usually disappointed because, in fact, they did not want to return to a place, but to a time, a time of youth (Hutcheon 1998: 2). Thus, since time, unlike space, is irreversible, nostalgia becomes a reaction to that fact.

Nostalgia is a feature of Western modernity. It has been argued that modern nostalgia is due to an identity crisis or a weakness of self-confidence in the present, which is compensated by turning to an idealised past (Greverus 1979). Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw singled out three key requirements under which nostalgia develops (Chase, Shaw 1989: 2–4):

1. A view of time as linear and with an undetermined future, as is typical for modern Western societies.
2. A sense that the present is deficient, applicable to societies and cultures as wholes or to particular groups or individuals within a society; the undesirable state of the present is compensated by a turn towards the past.
3. Objects, buildings or images from the past must be available in order to become appropriated nostalgically.

In contemporary society, nostalgia is manifested on different levels. It is a characteristic of the present to imbue consciously almost everything with an aura of nostalgia (advertising, fashion, tourism, etc.). That gives us a consumable identity. Usually these types of nostalgic feelings serve commercial interests and thereby nostalgia has become a tool for manipulation. Arjun Appadurai describes the mechanism of contemporary nostalgia industry:

Rather than expecting the consumer to supply memories while the merchandiser supplies the lubricant of nostalgia, now the viewer need only bring the faculty of nostalgia to an image that will supply the memory of a loss he or she has never suffered. This relationship may be called armchair nostalgia, nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory. (Appadurai 1998: 78)

Ulrika Wolf-Knuts has demonstrated how nostalgia is frequently used by modern mass media, appearing in writings about food, textiles, home interiors, cosmetics and healthcare, gardening, tourism, etc. Using symbols like idyllic peasant cottages, scenic views, elements from childhood, symbols of peace and warm colours, evoke memories of childhood or at least culturally shaped knowledge of how it must have been in the good old days. Products are claimed to be “ancient”, “from pure nature” – genuine, clean and trustworthy. One finds nostalgia associated with all kinds of subjects, even horoscopes (Wolf-Knuts 1995). Nostalgia thus plays an important role in all branches of cultural industry.

Nostalgia is also an important characteristic of various ideologies. It is hereby important to note that nostalgia is a transideological phenomenon, for example, nostalgia for an idealised community in the past has been articulated by ecological movements as well as nationalist or even totalitarian ideologies. Nostalgia also emerges strongly in post-colonial cultures. In the case when nostalgia is used for the purpose of
nationalism, we can often talk about the invented tradition – the past is represented in images that are useful to us in the present and that reflect our bias and current concerns and are effective to mobilise people (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983; Hutton 1999: 86). In the modern world the need for nostalgia is also often expressed through folklorism. Neither remains historical science seldom untouched by nationalist nostalgia, especially at politically unsettled times. Nostalgia inevitably appears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals (Boym 2001: xiv).

Nostalgia has many dimensions that are partly overlapping and partly complimentary (Wolf-Knuts 1995: 187). It not so much describes the past, but is a way of transmitting values and ideas that are important in contemporary life. Nostalgia is a kind of play with time. It is typical that nostalgia awakens in situations where expectations and hopes have not been met. The force and most important quality that distinguishes nostalgic recollection from other ways of looking at the past is its ability to transform the everyday into something significant and unpleasant into something pleasant.

Nostalgia is an universal phenomenon and its mechanism is largely similar everywhere. The techniques that are used to evoke nostalgia are rich details, simplification, idealisation, sharp contrasts and intensification (Wolf-Knuts 1995: 208).

Due to its comparative nature, nostalgia connects the past, the present and the future. Nostalgic sentiments are expressed through similar mechanisms, but are always shaped by specific cultural concerns and struggles. Since there is no consensus in the Estonian society about the attitude towards the past, so is nostalgia not manifested in one single way, but through a multiplicity of ideas and practices.

THE HOME IN TRANSITION

In the case of Soviet Estonia both Western and Soviet conceptions and patterns were combined in private everyday life. It served as a “subterranean ‘reservoir’ of unorthodox and dissident practices and opinions” (Garcelon 1997: 317) as well as an arena of adaptation and collaboration in the Soviet system. It has been demonstrated in previous studies that the cultural disruption after World War II in Estonia, often emphasised by historians or political scientists, was not total in everyday life. To a remarkable extent, cultural continuity was carried on in the domestic arena, largely in a silent manner, through objects, patterns of behaviour and ways of organising and using the private space. Thereby, home-making became an important way of constructing privacy, individuality and security (Kannike 2002: 218; 2005; 2006). Building one's own home or summer house with one’s own hands (and taking advantage of what actually belonged to the “system” with the help of trustworthy network) was a strong statement of self-fulfilment and a sign of a “true Estonian”. Also, the discourse on issues of the private sphere used the vocabulary that stressed its culturally distinctive meaning as a space where different cultural codes were applied.

The socio-economic changes in the 1990s – transition to market economy, privatisation of land and housing, opening up of everyday life to global patterns of culture and consumption – were accompanied by the sharp differentiation of lifestyles and mentalities in Estonia. Social scientists have emphasised a general turn from a collectivist culture to individualism as a characteristic feature of this decade (for example, Aarelaid
Earlier homogeneous consumption has been replaced by diverse consumption patterns (see in detail, Lauristin 2004: 277–278).

In the mid-1990s when some social and economic stability had been achieved, a real boom of home-decoration broke out, marked by the mushrooming of respective shops and numerous home-decoration journals and newspaper supplements in 1996–1998. Those journals enjoyed and continue to enjoy great popularity. Ethnological fieldwork carried out at that time suggests that in everyday culture home did not lose its central position. It continued to symbolise important values and a remarkable proportion of time and money available was and is invested into the building, reconstructing and decorating of homes (Kannike 2002: 47). The readers actively respond to the topics discussed through their letters, sometimes as comments to articles, but more often describing their own experiences, dilemmas and solutions as they carry out their home-making projects. A yearly event that attracts much attention also in the dailies and television, is the “Beautiful Home” competition arranged by the journal *Kodukiri* and a real estate agency. The winner receives 50,000 EEK and much attention, pictures and interviews with the authors of the best projects are always published and thereby obviously influence the general understanding of how a “nice home” should look like. Over the past few years television programmes on home decoration issues have also become quite popular.

What is introduced and taught by mass media also sheds light on the general ideological orientation of everyday life. Importantly, discussions over problems of taste and aesthetics are frequently connected to debates on the cultural belonging of Estonians, about values, ideals and dreams. The practical advice of professional designers or people who have just completed renovation in their home or are in the middle of decoration process is very often combined with general debates on worldviews and identities. Seemingly trivial aspects of everyday environment and behaviour are thereby regarded as important signs of self-definition. This is not surprising, since, according to Lotman and Uspenski, the change of cultures (especially, in eras of social cataclysms) is usually accompanied by a “sharply increased semioticism of behaviour, whereby also the fight against old rituals may acquire deeply ritualised character”. At the same time not only the introduction of new forms of behaviour, but also the strengthened significance (symbolism) of old forms may give evidence of a certain change of the type of culture (Lotman, Uspenski 1993: 327).

Thus, home-making practice, re-structuring and re-modelling of private space also acquires ritual dimensions. Looking at the debates on domestic culture it is significant that a lot of the key concepts used here are connected with categories of time, history and memory. It is the use of historical or “historical” objects that provokes debates and often distinguishes different strategies of defining new identities. In those debates remembering is not neutral but acquires emotional colouring and a strong nostalgic character. Such nostalgia not only emerges in the verbal form, but also speaks through visual texts – the silent language of objects and pictures.

In this context, looking for the reasons why nostalgia appears as a central issue in debates about home decoration will also give another insight into the larger theme of history, memory and identity in postsocialist Estonia that until now has mostly been studied from the viewpoint of autobiographical narratives or political history and the public discourse (Aarelaid 1998; Kirss, Köresaar, Lauristin 2004; Köresaar 2005).
Through taste and aesthetics people consciously or subconsciously try to communicate status and social position. In a situation of social and cultural disorientation the attitude towards collective and personal heritage becomes a cultural weapon. So, not surprisingly, one also frequently comes across debates over “right” or “wrong” nostalgia in postsocialist Estonia. Accordingly, in discussions on home design there is a clearly articulated tension between change and constancy, consumption ideology and timeless values, traditionalism and modernism.

Studies on consumer culture in Estonian transition society have demonstrated that in the period 1995–1997 a shift towards the aesthetisation, postmaterialisation and increasing refinement of consumption took place (Keller, Vihalemm 2003; Keller 2005). Since then a part of the media functions as a legitimator of elite culture and taste, but a majority attempts to respond to the popular taste and mainstream fashion trends.

Until today there exist no clear-cut hierarchies of taste in Estonia, but different attitudes to memory and local heritage enable to distinguish between some common versions of home-making. Below, some approaches to the use and interpretation of nostalgia in home-decorating will be described. Of course, we have to keep in mind that in many cases we cannot speak about any consistent strategy at all. Available resources and family situation largely determine the space left for creativity and ideal solutions on the home front.

**Version 1: Appropriating Local Heritage**

Among Estonian intellectuals a home or a studio in a historical building was highly valued already in the Soviet time. Medieval construction details, painted baroque ceilings or *art deco* ornaments were carefully restored, the furniture was acquired from antique shops, ordered from designers or made by oneself. This was a strategy of symbolic distinction from the socialist reality filled with standard interiors and low-quality objects. Today we can see that many families representing creative or academic professions cultivate a distinctive lifestyle using the same resources, but now opposing to unifying consumerism and mass taste. In their domestic interiors solid and traditional urban architecture and conscious choice of authentic antique objects is combined with professional artistic creation. The interior must not necessarily be totally “stylish”, some degree of eclecticism and some room for improvisation is highly desirable. Continuity and the historical dimension are most important values here that provide the family with a sense of security. Renovation of such a house is not just practical home-making, but a mission.

In such homes family history may be displayed in the form of some objects or photos, but the symbolic meaning of older layers of local heritage is even more significant. For example, Epp, an artist who lives in a historic house in the old town of Tallinn, speaks:

> It is important for a human being that you do not live alone here, that people have lived here before you too [...]. The centuries-old history of the house itself gives the background that cannot be found elsewhere. Unsymmetrical rooms, unexpected
niches and corners, old stoves, fragments of murals, etc. contribute a lot to the individuality of a home under a skilful hand. The objects and furniture that have come to the family over time have their meaning, their story that altogether make up the story of this family. Individuality and thrift offer a support in the nervous turn-of-the-century tumult. (Kodustuudio 1995: 4–6)

Families who have sufficient resources to buy a house often prefer a building of the 1930s in a green district like Nõmme in Tallinn or Tähtvere in Tartu. Reconstruction works in such a house are usually time-consuming, but the dream of a home in a “golden age” house usually keeps the owners going.

The home of Jana and Endrik in a stylish Nõmme villa is a perfect reconstruction of the 1930s world. Every door, window and floor was carefully restored or copied and the young family spent lots of time at antique fairs and shops to find authentic details. The furniture is either pre-war or in “old Scandinavian style. Wooden floors, light wallpaper with little motifs, light wooden panels, pastel and oak brownish colours.” (Kivi 2008: 18) The owners demonstrate a keen interest in the history of the house and its previous owners and a wish to identify not only with their physical environment, but also their values. Endrik says:

Wanderer [first owner of the house – A.K.] was the head of the Nõmme Houseowners’ Society. I would totally agree with most of his ideas and principles. He was worried about the roads and infrastructure of Nõmme, houses that were not cared of and gardens full of old stuff. (Ibid.: 18)

Raivo, a theologist and university lecturer also lives in a big house in Nõmme, built by a colonel of the Estonian army in the 1930s. This house is a compromise between strongly expressed nostalgia for the pre-war lifestyle, the practical needs of a family with five children and a desire for individual artistic expression. The ground floor represents a stylish 1930s interior with period furniture and is a perfect setting for listening to old tangos or romances that Raivo loves and a collection of old dolls. On the first floor the walls are dark red, the floor is painted blue and the childrens’ rooms are all different.

Like other owners of a restored historical house, Raivo does not regret the money spent for that purpose, because “it was such a noble house, it was worth to be restaured, you just had to do it.” (Toome 2008: 27)

Jaanus is a musician and tv-journalist who has decided to move permanently to his country-house in Hiiumaa. There is no electricity in the house, but the family fell in love with the place at first sight. “It was breathtaking. The coast, the nature, the birds. The only thought was: we have to get it.” (Kuldbek 2008: 10) In this case a nostalgia for nature is combined with a nostalgia for roots, because Jaanus’ ancestors come from Hiiumaa.

I feel a mental connection with Hiiumaa, the tradition that comes with the family and the names is rich and impressive […]. This little village, the tiny community that I come from became incredibly important to me. I have my own sacred places there. […] A well, a tree that was tall already when my mother was a child. (Ibid.: 12)

In the mid-1990s representatives of the economic capital also discovered historical old-town dwellings as well as former Baltic-German manor houses in the countryside. In
this case we usually have to do with a practical investment, but a moment of nostalgia is not of little importance here either. For Estonians as a peasant nation, the manor or the city palace of a nobleman has for centuries symbolised “good life” and “good manners”. Especially the 19th century Biedermeier aesthetics has remained influential for a long time despite modernist campaigns, and now once again emerges in the homes of the newly rich. Although the heritage used here is not Estonian in the strict sense – the town houses and manors were built by German nobility or merchants – it is perceived as symbolising national values and a distinctive Estonian way of life. So the way of life of the former upper classes is nationalised for economic, prestige as well as nostalgic purposes.

**Version 2: Combined “Historical Style”**

Compared to the previous examples, the design in such homes is more eclectic. These are often attempts to personalise a new industrially produced house or even a standard appartment in a (Soviet-time) block of flats. Typically characterised as “romantic style” in the press, the interiors display lots of handmade objects and souvenirs combined with pieces of peasant furniture and modern imitations of historical styles. The general impression is sometimes unacceptable for advocates of “good taste”.

Artistic production presented as art that actually is third-rate, tasteless and usually sentimental, is widesperead among uneducated consumers of art. [...] The gradually deepening wish to own old furniture (prestige, image) can become a major stumbling block causing slips of taste. Diletants should not try hand in this field. (Alling 1996: 12–13)

However, such homes are approved by mainstream home decoration journals reflecting their readers’ understanding that the “sense of home” and “warmth” are more important than clear-cut trends or uniform style. The inhabitants often draw their inspiration from foreign home decoration journals. “Old English” style with floral patterns, fluffy cushions and romantic curtains seems particularly popular. Strict modernist interiors are considered cold and uncomfortable.

Anne who lives in a Finnish pre-fabricated house reads lots of English, French and Italian home decoration journals, looking for interiors offering timeless cosyness, not minimalism.

Why should I feel uncomfortable on a hard and rectangular sofa? Or change a white cover even before anybody was able to sit on it? Oh no! But when she notices a round form, she is immediately thrilled. (Arak 2007: 10)

In descriptions of such interiors and in interviews with the inhabitants, family history and the “stories” of objects are discussed in detail and are clearly a priority. The owners here like to rearrange the rooms and “play” with things, but the home-decoration is never totally changed, because there are a number of “special” things that symbolise emotional continuity.

Our home consists of objects that are close to the heart and connected with memories; things that are associated with our hobbies, pieces of furniture that have
travelled with us from one place to another. [...] The wicker furniture comes from
the maidenhood of the housewife. The old buffet was saved from being sent to
the dump. The chest that serves as a table was bought from a crafts fair. [...] The
renovation started gradually and in a way that the former atmosphere of the house
would be preserved. There is still work to do for years. The owners are happy with
this and say that work is most enjoyable when one can do it little by little. (Kodukiri
1998: 10–12)

Version 3: Individually Experienced Heritage

The homes of many young urban families and their attitudes to the process of home-
making reveal the emergence of a new type of nostalgia. This attitude is not only char-
acteristic of home decoration. It also reflects a shift in the general attitude towards folk
culture and national heritage of this generation. For these people, an important part
of their lifestyle is to do things with their own hands in the home and to feel and sense
the past. Phenomena from the rural folk tradition have been revived here for cultural
recycling. When the old and authentic is cleaned and exposed, it is mixed with personal
artistic creation, international heritage and solutions of modern technology. Like in the
previous cases described above, home-making cannot be a quick makeover, but a long
process, a challenge that transforms not only the physical surroundings, but also the
personality. For these home-makers there does not exist any general model of “good
taste” or “authentic history” to be followed. Originality and individual investment of
time and energy are considered most important.

So, for example, Suusi (a woman in her late 20s) who spent her childhood in a block
of flats in Mustamäe longed for a “real home”. Before the birth of their child Suusi and
her husband moved into the upper floor of a house with garden and tried to “please
the house and its era” – the thirties – in their rearrangements. Suusi describes what an
effort it was for them to “scratch the flat out from behind too orderly and straight wall
gips and other too beautiful “euro”. [...] The minimalism seen in journals is not suitable
for old wooden houses”. (Saabre 2005)

Kitchen cupboards had remained here in their full beauty of the 1990s. At first it
seemed that they simply have to be thrown out. But economical thinking won: why
produce rubbish and order another sawdust framework. [...] “I stained the wooden
doors and the result was better than would have been, ordering new ones form a
salon. Actually I rather support such eco-lifestyle. [...] The door bought from a shop
got an appearance pertaining to the period: all that we needed was a brush, some
paint and first of all the courage to make a move.” Stories about old pieces of furni-
ture that were bought one by one from antique shops are also a natural part of that
home. The generation of their parents considered such furniture old-fashioned and
worthless [...] their dream was a flat with all modern conveniences. “But I grew up
there and longed for my own garden and home in a wooden house with breathing
walls more than anything.” (Ibid.)

Toomas, a marketing director, renovated a flat in a 100-years-old limestone house in
central Tallinn:
The hardest work was the cleaning of stone walls. It took weeks to clean each of the walls. At first all layers of wallpaper and pasteboard had to be removed. Then finally came the plaster that I actually hacked off with axe. [...] But the idea for the curtains came from a bar in Miami and the idea for textiles in the bedroom came after we visited London: we wanted the bedroom to have a touch of boudoir. Most of the furniture is renovated Indian antique. (Kivi 2006: 11–14)

His wife Tiivi considers a special way of gardening very important:

There are big flower boxes behind the bedroom windows where in winter we have bonsais and heather, in the spring there are pansies, then marigolds and then asters. (Ibid.)

A couple in their early 30s, Mari, who has worked for an advertising agency and is now at home with two children and Erki, a public relations manager, lived in a flat in a suburb of Tallinn, but then built a new home – an environment-friendly log house 270 km from Tallinn.

We wanted a home where the wisdom of old traditions and contemporary facilities would be united. The house is 100 per cent handmade – curds paint, clay plaster, linseed oil, reed mat, old bricks and, of course, timber. We tried to use only local resources. Sewerage was built as a wet-area cleaner. (Pajula 2006: 22, 25)

The young couple advocates for a “natural way of life” – they eat only local food, teach the children various farmworks, etc.

In the city words often seem hollow, but here one speaks about things as they are. And many issues that bulk large in the big city seem quite empty from here. (Ibid.)

These examples illustrate a general tendency that in contemporary Estonia folk culture has become a positive alternative to the levelling tendencies and commercialised everyday life (see in detail, Aarelaid-Tart, Kannike 2004). Home-decoration may become a means of renewing traditional patterns of behaviour and thinking, using a code that is understandable in modern society. This is a longing for a past or a place that those young people have never personally lost. Such attitude is also closely connected with general ecological awareness increasingly popular among the young generation.

Version 4: Nostalgia Rooted in Personal Memories

In the homes of the elder generation we can often see a form of nostalgia associated with happy times in the past, with childhood, youth, lifetime hobbies, etc. In some cases time even seems to have stopped. The interiors of the 1970s or even 1960s may have remained unchanged for decades. There are also quite a number of homes where the furniture comes from pre-war times or is even older. While for the elderly owner a great part of the interior is associated with memories, at the same time whole rooms function merely as storages. The static nature of the home is a value in itself, providing the owners a sense of security, the highly appreciated “peace and quiet”. Frequently whole parts of rooms are dedicated to remembering. Such is for example a house in
Tartu, built by a university professor in the 1930s where now his elderly son Jakob lives in the same way as the family did 60 years ago.

In this home the original integral style has been preserved. One can hardly see a piece of furniture here less than a hundred years old. The large parlour has been kept as it was in the old times. [...] Even today the housewife lays the table in the dining room. There are hundreds of tiny things to which a contemporary man even cannot give a name. Here they are carefully kept and loved in their places. (Kivi-salu 1998: 22)

Such a return to the past clearly has a therapeutic function. The desire to keep something unchanged reflects the aim to attach and strengthen one’s identity by maintaining old features. Here the function of nostalgia as “a counter-force, a security and point of reference from which to view the present” (Åström 2004: 23) is most important. Such attitude is of course not specific to the Estonian transition culture, but characterises the conservative lifestyle of the elder generation everywhere.

But this type of nostalgia is not always associated with passive reflections and retreatment from contemporary life.

Steffi is an old lady in her 80s who has lived abroad for a long time and returned to Estonia some years ago. She mentions some “anchors of memory” in her home that are especially valuable, like a china coffee-set that she took with her when the family had to flee from Estonia in 1944 and that has accompanied her in her homes in Germany, Austria, England and Canada. Persian carpets remind her of her late husband whose family was involved in carpet business. But the nostalgic dimension of this home does not only involve material objects. For Steffi her collection of books and opera-videos are among the most important things that give her home its true feeling. Unlike that of Jakob, Steffi’s home is not a “memorial museum”. She likes to buy new things (as she can afford it) and has given a number of valuable items away:

She has given her grandmother’s silver wedding crown to the Kadriorg Art Museum, some jewellery and expensive clothes to friends. “Why should I keep my long mink coat when it is too heavy for me to wear it now?” (Kivi 2008: 43)

In the homes of the elder generation one also comes across a more specific dimension of nostalgia that has largely been ignored by the home-decoration journals – nostalgia towards the Soviet time. In public debates on Estonian history the Soviet decades appear as the most controversial period and there is no consensus yet achieved over this time. In debates over the “nice Estonian home” the Soviet time has been used as a negative contrast from the late 1980s already, but recently the attitudes have become more ambivalent and nuanced. For a part of the elder generation the objects from the recent past symbolise a time that is not wholly appreciated, but in retrospect is felt to have provided relative safety and stability compared with the present day.

At the same time the design of the 1970s and 1980s has been discovered by the young generation in the context of global retro-trend. For them it represents the same sort of exotic as an old chest from a peasant farmhouse and since they do not have personal memories of that time, their attitude to it is more relaxed. Recently even the attitude to the most negative symbol of Soviet unified and impersonal everyday life in Estonia – Lasnamäe, an enormous district of block-houses in Tallinn – has acquired some nostal-
gic features. Compared with the sterile new suburban areas it appears more colourful, interesting and, paradoxically, even more private:

Sometimes I even feel sad when I remember the panoramic views. [...] Sunday walks to little shops selling weird Russian and Ukrainian goods, the downstairs neighbour who organised polyphonic evenings of Soviet songs with a piano accompaniment, the friendly Russian cleaning woman who was like a symbol for the whole house; a sense of home, but at the same time absolute anonymity, the possibility to hide from the surrounding world. [...] In my new home in the middle of urbanised district of summer houses I will never be so sheltered like in Lasnamäe. (Karu 2006: 17)

However, in reality most people would definitely not want to return to the Soviet everyday and there is no widespread Soviet nostalgia comparable, for example, with the widespread attitudes in Russia (see Boym 2001: 41–48).

**Version 5: Contested Modernism**

The first home decoration as well as “society” journals in the mid-1990s started to display homes of the new “elite”, mostly young businessmen, where the key words describing the design were *stylish*, *expensive* and *international*. In such homes – usually new houses in new prestigious suburban districts – there was little space left for the family’s own creative imagination. Even the smallest details were designed by professionals to make sure that everything was “right”. The owners clearly preferred not to be reminded of their earlier status and lifestyle. The family history was not “noble” enough to be put on display and signs of the Soviet period were eliminated as quickly as possible. Importantly, here, a modern minimalist interior did not primarily reflect the aesthetic preferences of the inhabitants, but a wish to change one’s image quickly and totally, creating a contrast to the late-Soviet massive and abundant furnishing style and demonstrate the adoption of a “European” lifestyle.

The following remark is characteristic of descriptions of such homes: “The few pieces of furniture taken from the old home are almost unnoticeable in the new spacious home.” (Kodustuudio 1997: 9) Trends are a priority here over memories and old objects, even if the latter are more practical than the new fashionable furniture. Contrary to the traditional Estonian way of keeping things “just in case”, here, if the old furniture or memorabilia do not fit in, they are thrown away. So, for example, a prominent interior designer describes the process of furnishing the new house of a bank manager:

In the living-room a painting in greenish-blueish colours was the starting point before all pieces of furniture. Only the old black piano had the honour of being taken to the new home. (Kadalipp 1996: 37).

Thus, here we can speak about strongly expressed counter-nostalgia where the emphasis is on “forgetting” or filtering the disagreeable aspects of the past. The modern interiors emphasise the positive (idealised) future that is contrasted to the backward past. However, such practice was not only praised and set as example, but also criticised as upstart’s behaviour and lacking common sense.

But by the late 1990s the “total look” trend started to crumble. The standards that
seemed desirable just a few years ago were now criticised as lacking personal touch, too cold and sterile. The previously “exclusive” materials now looked too common. Importantly, most critiques mentioned that the emotional and historical dimension was missing in those interiors.

Today there are few purely modernist homes in Estonia. Although it has become prestigious to order a minimalist project from a well-known architect, the family usually wants to decorate the interior by themselves and the principle “less is more” is rarely followed. However, it would be a simplification to equal living in a minimalist home with denial of history or personal memory. A house with bare walls and huge windows may serve as a perfect background for admiring the surrounding view and therefore, the desire to be in the middle of nature. This is just another form of nostalgia, not the lack of it.

On the other hand, some “modernists” argue that there are psychological reasons behind lifestyle choices. For example, a young business manager who owns a minimalist flat argues that the people who cannot live in a home without “anchors” of memories are just psychologically unbalanced and insecure. They are afraid of adventures and new experiences and therefore attached to moth-eaten furniture (Vool 2003).

Over the years people’s attitudes towards home decoration principles have become more relaxed and trusting one’s own taste is more common. People are no longer ashamed of their nostalgic feelings. For example, Inge, a middle-aged country woman writes to Kodukiri:

Earlier I always made the effort and tried to match things and colours. Tried to create order. Everything has to be in its fixed place. [...] But now I have finally realised that comfort, a cosy feeling for the family is more important than order and beauty. [...] I took out all the sweet things that are important and dear to me and my family, although they are unpractical and put them on the shelves and cupboards. It is not important whether they match with other things. The atmosphere and unexplainable sweetness that affect our souls are important. Let the trends be whatever they are, they do not make a real home. (Kodukiri 2005: 16)

CONCLUSION

Nostalgia is a special way of thinking about the past and the future at the same time. It is never merely a longing for the past, but also a response to circumstances in the present. This is combined with a system of values so that different times get different qualities. Thus, nostalgia is a phenomenon through which the pre-modern cyclical understanding of time manifests itself in modern folk culture – attempts to re-experience the bygone time and attribute the qualitative nature of time. The aesthetics of nostalgia is less a matter of simple memory than of “complex projection; the invocation of a partial, idealised history merges with a dissatisfaction with the present” (Hutcheon 1998: 3).

Outbreaks of nostalgia often follow revolutions and social upheavals. This was also the case in late 20th and early 21st century Estonia. However, the specific character and typology of nostalgia are of local character. Like in the Soviet time, nostalgia is a means of maintaining identity continuity in postsocialist Estonia. Everyday practice often liberates itself of the ideological discourse of “good taste” and the logic of com-
merce, producing its own norms and hierarchies. Similarly to the previous decades, individual work invested in home-making and reconstructing historical milieu is used to overcome cultural dilemmas and preserve cultural continuity despite social changes and identity disorientation. It is a physical, mental and emotional process of identity-formation.

While some forms of nostalgia reveal unity with previous periods, others are inspired by the new social reality. Alongside with the extremes – passive idealisation of the past or total counter-nostalgia there exist versions of home-decoration where nostalgia also functions as a resource of prestige, creative inspiration or therapy. It appears to be a framing device within which important cultural debates take place and issues of identity are negotiated. The ambivalent nature of nostalgia in contemporary Estonia is due to the specific local pattern of interwoven social and cultural processes. As in the home different times (historical and personal time, astronomic and emotional time) exist side by side, it remains a key arena for the dialogue between personal and collective memory.

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AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY RURAL IDENTITIES: THE CASE OF TOURISM FARMS IN SOUTH-EAST ESTONIA

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Abstract
We focus* on how tourism farmers use the potential of their living environment, consisting of both cultural and natural elements, for designing and mediating certain affordances for activities that can be performed in their farms. From the ecological perspective this living environment, perceived through the set of everyday and tourism related activities, may become an important part of individual rural identities of the tourism farmers in Rõuge and Haanja municipalities in Võru County, south-east Estonia. We analyse different activities practised in tourism farms, related to particular environments as “taskscape” and show how these “taskscape” participate in the formation of contemporary rural identities as they are related to farm tourism and tourism farmers individual place identities.

Keywords: farm tourism ● rural life ● identity ● affordances ● taskscape

Recent works on regional and rural identities stress that “locality”, “rurality” and “identity” are all dynamic concepts, the meanings of which change in time and due to context; furthermore, these three concepts usually have multiple meanings as places may have various meanings to the different individuals and groups who identify themselves with them (Haartsen et al. 2000; Paasi 2003; Sharpley 2004). Although spatial meanings are changing and heterogeneous, places, regions and local identities still have crucial significance (Ruotsala 2008: 46). Identity is always in the process of formation, whether we consider its spatial or temporal, individual or collective dimensions; actually all

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identities have a spatial dimension (as human action emerges in particular places, within certain physical settings).

Tourism as a cultural practice “is mediated through, and shaped by, existing aspects of place identity. In turn, place identities may exhibit changes as a result of tourism related activities.” (Kneafsey 2000: 36) The research of rural identities in particular locations and in relation to farm tourism\(^1\) raises the question, “how identity constructions are based on specific perceived characteristics or qualities of an area?” (Haartsen et al. 2000: 145). More precisely, how place identity is defined by individuals relying on three interrelated components – (1) the physical features of a certain environment, (2) observable activities and (3) symbolic meanings of this environment (George et al. 2009: 98–99). Namely, the research question for us is how these three aspects of a certain place are perceived and conceptualised on an individual level by tourism farmers we researched in Rõuge and Haanja municipalities. The manifestations of place identity(ies) are realised in different narratives, including life histories, which in turn may draw on miscellaneous elements: ideas on “nature”, “the built environment”, “culture/ethnicity”, “dialects”, etc. (Paasi 2003: 477).\(^2\) These narratives are closely related to the situated practices of people’s everyday lives – both constitute each other mutually. Talking about place-related identities “at a specific location is the first step in creating such identities” (Huigen et al. 2000: 150). In that sense individual place identities, as we present them here, were created by tourism farmers who told us their stories: these reflections on their living environments form a significant part of our empirical data.

From an ecological perspective\(^3\) it is important to underline that the living environment of farmers is an integrated whole consisting of both cultural and natural elements (see Gibson 1986: 128), of both physical and symbolic aspects as the basis for identity formation. Therefore, we argue that it is not sufficient to say that local rural identities are merely social constructs but they are likewise particular embodied perceptions of and in particular places. In sum, individual place identity refers to the perception of one’s self (namely, a tourism farmer) in mutually meaningful relation to one’s living environment, an environment that forms the basis for the individual’s belonging as it is perceived via certain (embodied) actions, perceptual experiences and representations.\(^4\)

In this paper we focus on how tourism farmers use the potential of their living environment to create certain possibilities for activities that can be performed on their farms. From an ecological perspective, as introduced in the first part of the article, this living environment as a set of everyday activities may become an important part of the individual rural identities of the tourism farmers we interviewed during our fieldwork in Rõuge and Haanja municipalities in Võru County, south-east Estonia, in 2008 and 2009.\(^5\) In the second part of the study we aim to analyse different activities practised in tourism farms and how they relate to particular environments as “taskscapes” (Ingold 1993; 2000) and to discuss how these “taskscapes” participate in the formation of the contemporary rural identities that are related to farm tourism and tourism farmers’ individual place identities.
Though it is not our aim to focus on how contemporary representations and interpretations of “rurality” are socially constructed and related to the meanings of landscapes in and outside the municipalities we were researching, the concept of rurality as it is related to certain identities, environments and activities still needs some clarification. The concept of “the rural” or “rurality” is not easily definable in the current situation of changing lifestyles and novel activities (e.g. farm tourism) associated with rural regions – from the socio-cultural perspective one should not define rural as opposed to urban environments but rather take into account a rural-urban continuum as the political, economic and social structures of rural areas are becoming increasingly urban (Sharpley 2004: 376). Contemporary rural areas have become sites for recreational opportunities and experiences rather than mainly places for agricultural production once identifying the “countryside” (Kneafsey 2001; Sharpley 2004; Crouch 2006). Therefore, the term “rural” is acquiring new meanings for both locals (especially for those settled quite recently) and tourists. “Rural” is associated with certain lifestyle values, privacy, peace and silence (contrasted with urban noise), the beauty and purity of the natural environment (as opposed to artificial, urban environments) and with heritage (both cultural and natural) (Cloke 2006). Experiencing silence in their living environment is an experience tourism farmers regard as valuable, both for themselves and for their guests:

They come here because of the pristine nature, because of the calm and the silence. If we were to build god knows what sort of big hotels here, then people might discover that it’s not a place they wanted to visit anymore. (Peeter, Sepa Farm, Rõuge)

As revealed in the interviews, silence was actually one of the most treasured values for tourism farmers, as all of them discussed it at length during the interviews. Most of them stressed the importance of keeping a balance with nature, often seeing themselves as mediators between the local environment and tourists.

The decrease in traditional agricultural activities (e.g. farming) in many rural areas in Europe, including Estonia, has lead to the development of new activities of which rural tourism and recreation forms a considerable part. A characteristic example of the latter in Estonia is the development of farm tourism, which became an organised activity from the middle of the 1990s. Production farms started to turn into tourism farms in Estonia as in other European countries – tourism promised alternative income for those who wanted to keep their rural homes but were not able to go on with agricultural activities (cf. Busby, Rendle 2000; Granberg 2004). Today about two-thirds of all accommodation establishments in Estonia are located in rural areas (Ardel 2004: 5).

Yet, although rural tourism may take the risk of turning some areas into “rural theme parks for urban middle classes,” one still must admit that many rural landscapes that otherwise would become desolate are currently preserved through tourism (Lowenthal 2007: 646). As there are many kinds of rurality, there are likewise many forms of rural tourism, and considerable differences are noticeable even when we focus solely on farm tourism. Therefore, the question of what is considered “rural” or a “rural experience” today remains, as does the question of how it differs when we talk about local inhabitants (including farmers) or urban visitors? And the question directly related to the focus
of our paper is: how does the rural environment, and the activities practised there (incl. production farms as well as tourism farms), create or recreate a contemporary image of “farm life” in relation to traditional representations of this life. Nevertheless, tradition “undergoes continual generation and regeneration within the contexts of people’s practical engagement with significant components of the environment” (Ingold, Kurttila 2000: 192). The question in the case of tourism farmers is how much they are supposed to be the “guardians of tradition” (associated with the region and rural life in general) and how much they can create new rural practices because they operate within new sets of social relations (Kneafsey 2000: 47). Another issue is also related to this question. Are we talking about a commodification of the place by tourism farmers as local entrepreneurs that attempts to correspond to external needs, or are we talking about their need to sustain in the environment they are living in and their efforts to find ways to do so?

In sum, we may say that rural identities are constantly changing and often debatable due to contested understandings of rurality by the different agents involved (Haartsen et al. 2000; Holloway, Kneafsey 2004). Once associated with tradition and continuity, today rural identities seem to acquire more and more subjectively perceived characteristics. Contemporary rural identities consist of several dimensions closely tied to a specific region, and to specific living environments that are perceived via particular activities performed in these environments:

The rural emerges as multiple, diverse, less constituted according to the ways in which its various features may be represented or experienced as social distinctions but more in terms of the ways in which individuals, through their actions, make sense of it. (Crouch 2006: 357)

Consequently, we may say that the rural environment, not just as a symbolic representation but also as a physical space, forms an important part of one’s identity. It becomes significant through everyday activities in one’s practical interaction with the lived environment. For that reason we focus on how tourism farmers as individuals perceive their living environment to be the basis for their identity through different activities they perform in their everyday lives, as well as activities they perform for and with the tourists.

AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE TO RURAL IDENTITIES: AFFORDANCES OF RURAL ENVIRONMENTS

The concept of “affordance” has become a useful analytical tool with which to overcome approaches in several disciplines of the social sciences and humanities that tend to regard culture – nature or human – environment as dichotomies. In tourism studies the epistemology of “affordance” is closely related to the actuality of issues like materiality (of space), embodied experiences and practical actions (bodily performances, multisensory corporeal experiences), and mobility (of people in spaces) (Haldrup, Larsen 2006: 279). Affordances are “spatial potentialities, constraining and enabling range of actions”, setting certain limitations to particular options for actions and producing the “everyday practical orientation” of a place (Edensor 2006b: 30).

To make more sense of the applicability of affordance in tourism studies, we would
like to give a brief background of the genealogy of the concept. “Affordance” is the term coined by an ecological psychologist James J. Gibson, who defined it as following:

What the environment offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, [...] it is something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies complementarity of the animal and the environment. [...] affordances of the environment [...] are in a sense objective, real, and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective, phenomenal, and mental. [...] [An affordance is] equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. (Gibson 1986: 127, 129)

Hence, affordances are qualities relative to someone’s perception, not just the physical properties of the environment. Affordances, according to Gibson, are perceivable possibilities for action, with certain environments and objects affording certain types of sensations, perceptions and behaviours. Nevertheless, “affordances are environmental counterparts to the organism’s behavioural potentialities” (Heft 1989: 6), i.e. affordances imply mutuality of the perceiver and the environment. After Gibson the relational and situative quality of affordances is continually stressed. For example, “affordances stem from the reciprocity between the environment and the organism and derive [...] from how people are kinaesthetically active within their world” (Costall 1995: 475); “affordances are features meaningful for an active perceiver” (Heft 2001: 123); or “affordances are relations between particular aspects of organisms and particular aspects of situations” (Chemero 2003).

Affordances are dynamic and processual, changing in time and because of particular emerging interactions between humans, environments and objects, and thus producing various “taskscapes” (Ingold 1993; 2000) and “sensescapes” (Porteous 1990). The environment of a particular rural region may consist of affordances created by the cultural tradition (e.g. agricultural landscapes, farmsteads) but likewise affordances of the specific natural characteristics of the region (e.g. hills, forests, lakes, rivers, etc). On tourism farms and in their surrounding rural environments, varied affordances appear from activities performed there (e.g. lakes afford water for swimming, boating and fishing; hills, depending on their surface, afford walking, climbing, cycling, and skiing; forests afford hiking and picking wild mushrooms or berries; farmsteads themselves afford a manifold of activities depending on the creativity of the host and/or hostess, such as “hot tub” sauna (a barrel with its own heating system for the water), cooking lamb underground). Furthermore, what the environment once offered to its inhabitants may lose its importance as the socio-cultural situation changes. This is exactly the case in the municipalities of Rõuge and Haanja (and in Estonia in general) where we can see a lot of abandoned collective farm buildings. This illustrates the decrease in agricultural practices that has lead to maintenance of landscapes to preserve their aesthetic and heritage value (e.g. mowed land affords pleasure both for the eye and foot (walking)), practices that are not related to traditional agricultural function (forage for farm cows and horses). Thereby affordances providing agricultural activities are replaced by affordances relating to tourism activities and recreation. Hence, we can likewise make a distinction between “obsolete” and “present” affordances – the former are those once relevant in a rural region’s agrarian past but are now abandoned due to their irrelevance (e.g. former (collective) farm fields), the latter are affordances in active use in the current situation.
In their environmentally engaged activities, animals, humans included, limit the affordances by “picking up a particular kind of information, leading to the perception of a particular affordance” (Ingold 1992: 46). On the other hand, there may be “many offerings of the environment that have not been taken advantage of” (Gibson 1986: 129), meaning the potentialities of organism-environment relations that are not yet actualised/realised, and which we therefore cannot call affordances. Environments usually have more possibilities for (interaction) than are actively realised in everyday practices (considering affordances as actualisations of the potentials). These are resources of the environment that have not yet become particular affordances (“opportunities for action”), which people are “not yet aware of or acting on” (Reed 1996: 18). Harry Heft (2001: 132) proposes a distinction between the “potential functional properties of the environment considered with respect to an individual and the actualised properties of the environment, i.e. selected by that individual as an intentional agent. For a particular individual in a specific place there is a range of affordances potentially available to be engaged, these affordances exist whether or not they are presently perceived because they inhere in the structure of the environment.” Similarly we may distinguish “concealed affordances” specifying that they are concealed according to who views them (e.g. for a tourism farmer certain hills afford ATV rides or snowboarding, whereas for his or her neighbour these affordances may not be apparent).

In addition, other humans can likewise be a source of affordances, and “for tool-using culture as ours everything about perceiving is socially and culturally embedded”; in this sense, all human affordances have the social dimension, i.e. they can be considered “social affordances” (Good 2007: 271). The selection of possible affordances depends on the particular culture of the community one lives in, its norms and social relations (Rajala 2004: 395). Furthermore, there is no doubt that in everyday practices, affordances emerge not in chain but rather in a constant flow of activities that are co-regulated and jointly produced in social interaction (Good 2007: 277–280). From an ecological point of view we live in an environment that we share with other humans and other species; i.e. we have “socialised awareness” and “shared perception” of the environment (one individual may be aware of what the environment could offer to another individual) (Reed 1988: 122). This is particularly relevant when we talk about tourism farmers as both “affordance designers” and “affordance mediators”. Tourism farmers are those who both see the perceptual and interactional potentiality of the environment they have either designed themselves or mediate via their different cognitive competencies to tourists. So, they provide tourists with affordances in addition to those their guests are already able to expect and thus to detect (e.g. they keep constantly working out new activities that can be performed in farms and their surroundings). Only some of these affordances are related to agriculture, especially in the present situation. Rural tourism, in the region we researched, is a practice that is constantly developing, introducing novel affordances and refreshing the obsolete ones, which is relevant to both tourists as well as to the other community members. To sum up, certain rural environments afford certain identity formation for tourism farmers via creative use of the affordances of their living environment.
Rural environments, cultural landscapes or farmsteads, are inhabited by humans who are constantly practising certain activities, “knowledgeable practices”, in these environments thereby creating certain “taskscapes” (Ingold 1993: 157) that are relational and dynamic both in terms of space and time. “Just as the landscape is an array of related features so – by analogy – the taskspace is an array of related activities” (Ingold 2000: 195). Due to their relational nature, taskscapes “persist only as long as there are people continuing to practice certain activities, those practices of dwelling in the particular landscape” (Michael 2000: 111). Taskscapes are associated with the everyday activities in familiar spaces, local and domestic spaces that are rendered comfortable and homely and recreated constantly by certain “habits and habitation” (Edensor 2006b: 28), by certain “active engagement with the world” (Edensor 2002: 55, 57). The notion of taskspace is closely related to the concept of “ecological niche” (Gibson 1986) and to the recently proposed concept of “cognitive niche” (Magnani, Bardone 2008) as all three can be considered sets of affordances; which is to say that taskscapes consist of spatially situated activities using particular sets of affordances of the environment. Inhabitants of a place have a practical orientation to its materiality – a taskspace fosters a range of affordances of an environment “delimiting some and enabling others” (Edensor 2004: 110).

In the case of farm tourism, taskscapes may emerge in both farmsteads as well as more distant surroundings, which become extended environments for the farms; taskscapes may actualise in both farmers’, as well as tourists’, activities. There are a number of “popular rural competencies” (Edensor 2006a: 492) tourism farmers use for their own life as well as for their business: knowledge of different characteristics and affordances of the place in which they live (both their farmstead and its surroundings), as well as certain skills they have acquired while living there. Thereby, taskscapes form a basis for their personal place identities – they are “space-making practices which embed identity” (Edensor 2002: 55). In the case of rural tourism we should pay attention to how tourism farmers are in a way “taskspace-experts” and “taskspace-mediators” for particular places, because they are able to be aware of (or detect) a wide range of affordances for these places (especially those affordances not related to traditional agriculture) and to deliver the most suitable to tourists. However, taskscapes can likewise become environments affording multiple activities (tasks) for tourists. Tourists perform activities and are bodily involved through multisensory perception using affordances present in the environments created and mediated by tourism farmers.

Considering the theoretical framework we argue that all rural environments are complex and dynamic and consist of both natural and cultural elements as well as various sets of affordances (changing in time and according to the perceiver) that can be viewed as taskscapes. Tourism farms are not just environments for tourists’ activities and experiences, they are also everyday lived environments for the tourism farmers themselves. In the following section we will look at how the taskscapes of tourism farms (and their surroundings) that farmers share with their guests become an important part of the formation of their identities.
When choosing an area for our fieldwork, the main consideration was definitely that the Võru region is one of the most popular domestic tourism and leisure destinations in Estonia, apart from the islands off the coast of western Estonia.\textsuperscript{16} This is mostly due to the fact that the southern Estonian landscape differs from that of the rest of Estonia because of its many forests, lakes and hilly countryside. The Võru region (Võrumaa in Estonian) is also different because of its specific local ethnic identity, which has been (re)discovered both by tourists and the locals themselves in the past fifteen years or so. All researched tourism farms were situated in the municipalities of Rõuge and Haanja, which are part of the territory of the Haanja Nature Park.\textsuperscript{17} The latter was formed to protect the landscape characteristic to this upland region, but also its lifestyle, with small villages where the houses are far apart, small fields, pastures and grasslands, as well as the specific agricultural methods used in the uplands. The municipalities of Haanja and Rõuge are among the most popular tourism destinations in the Võru region due to the rich opportunities for nature tourism, recreation and tourism farms.

The main empirical basis for our research is the data collected via semi-structured interviews, conversations and co-performed practices with the tourism farmers and other tourists, during three field trips, in 2008–2009. We visited seven tourism farms, and interviewed eight tourism farmers (two of whom were a couple; there were six men and two women in total and their ages ranged from 28 to 55) who agreed to the use of their first names in our research. Farm tourism in general is considered a small-scale enterprise in Estonia, though the farms we researched varied from very small farms (e.g. Mäe Farm can accept a maximum of eight guests) to bigger farms (e.g. Kiidi Tourism Farm can accommodate 50 people during the winter and 70 during the summer). In addition, camping is also welcomed in the farmyards at several farms as a way of enjoying the rural milieu with some additional comfort.

\textbf{TASKSCAPES FOR IDENTITY FORMATION: TOURISM FARMS IN RÕUGE AND HAANJA}

The tourism farms researched are predominantly family enterprises closely connected with the natural environment. Traditional agricultural activities are practised to a certain degree (e.g. keeping some farm animals, growing vegetables and herbs). The traditions of local culture are noticeable in the food provided (Suhka and Vaskna Farms) and the language spoken (Võru dialect, used by some tourism farmers, is significant mainly to domestic tourists); rural crafts that are performed in demonstrations (blacksmithing on Sepa Farm) and handicraft objects displayed in the farm environment both in- and outdoors (Suhka and Vaskna Farms). Tourist farms could be regarded as a specific type of place in the rural environment that gives tourism farmers opportunities to make use of their skills and competencies and provide experiences to their guests with which they (re)construct rural taskscapes. In a way, the countryside can be seen as the “refuge” of specialised skills and crafts, connoting “a nostalgia for an era of skilled work” as “rurality requires the ongoing performance of skilful action for its sustenance” (Edensor 2006a: 490). Most of the tourism farmers we visited during our fieldwork offer their
guests the opportunity to experience different kinds of crafts and skills, using their own hobbies and backgrounds to set up a space where they provide opportunities to complete different tasks. Tourism farms in Rõuge and Haanja provide a rich variety of rural leisure activities that can be practised either on the farmstead or in the vicinity (i.e. the surrounding natural environment is actively engaged in the overall experience). Furthermore, various activities and attractions are made available through networking with other farmers (both those working on other tourism farms or on production farms) thus extending the taskscapes of a particular farm.

Farm tourism activity is primarily a lifestyle enterprise for the farmers we interviewed, therefore researching the taskscapes they inhabit and provide to their guests makes it possible to detect some aspects of their identities. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the enterprises are called “tourism farms”, they provide not just the experiences of farm life in a traditional sense, but also rural experiences more generally, thanks to the different taskscapes involved. Tourism farmers see their role as mediators of local culture and nature, introducing the taskscapes of their farmsteads as well as surroundings, for example, through interaction with animals or hikes in the neighbourhood. Every farm we researched offers experiences that are important to the farmer and are not offered only for the sake of providing attractions to tourists. All the interviewed tourism farmers design affordances for various tasks and experiences creating taskscapes of, for example, craftsmanship, the farmstead, the forest and the sauna, as examined in the following part of this article. (Due to the limits of the article we confined our analysis to some representative cases only.) Our selection of these particular examples was based on some of the most common, and at the same time most significant, taskscapes of farm tourism in the region. They were mainly deducted from the interviews in which farmers stressed the importance of particular environments and activities. There are, of course, several other activities provided on the tourism farms of the Võru region and some of the examples cannot be considered typical to all tourism farms. (For instance, the craftsmanship of a blacksmith can be experienced on only one of the farms we studied, although different kind of crafts are practised and displayed in some other farms; e.g. handicrafts at Vaskna Farm, breadbaking workshops at Kiidi Farm, etc.). In addition, the importance, meaning and use of some of the most common taskscapes (e.g. those related to animals, outdoor activities or sauna) vary according to the way a particular farmer interprets them.

TASKSCAPE: BLACKSMITHING AT SEPA FARM

Peeter is a working blacksmith who earns most of his income from selling his work. In 2000 he bought a farmhouse in Rõuge municipality and moved there (along with his smithy) from Võru town. He renamed the farm Sepa (Blacksmith’s) Farm and started welcoming tourists to his home. Peeter told us that people had already been very interested in his work while he was living in the town, but he couldn’t receive guests there because of the urban setting (his smithy was located in an industrial part of the town along with, for example, car repair garages and manufacturing buildings of different varieties, etc.). He said that it would have been “simply strange to talk about a craft that is so old” in the industrial milieu of the town.
After moving away from the town, Peeter discovered that the new home was the kind of environment that affords him a taskscape that he can use for facilitating tourism ventures:

And when I bought this place, here was this old stable that I really liked and I thought that one day I’ll rebuild it into my smithy. I don’t remember when I got the idea to start with tourism, maybe a couple of weeks or months after buying the place, it was sort of spontaneous. The place itself offered the opportunity and I thought that here I have the possibility to show this work and introduce it to people.

Peeter offers his guests different options: one can just visit his smithy to observe while he and his employees are doing their everyday work, there is an opportunity to agree upon a special demonstration of the blacksmith’s work (this lasts 45 to 60 minutes and generally takes place in his outdoor-smithy, if the weather conditions allow), and there is also the possibility to arrange a demonstration with an opportunity for the tourists to try their hand at forging under his guidance (approximately two hours), the souvenirs, usually nails, that the guests have crafted themselves (with the help of Peeter), can be taken home as memorabilia of the tasks performed.

The most popular event at Peeter’s smithy is forging a lucky horseshoe for newlyweds, a ritualistic event Peeter has designed specifically for wedding days (it is performed in a small traditional-style outdoor smithy during the summer season):

They are making with my help or I with their help the horseshoe for luck. [...] We are making it together, putting their names on it and the date and then I will tell them where this belief comes from, that the horseshoe brings luck, I will explain it.

Most of the preparatory work with the horseshoe is done the previous day, more or less 95 per cent of all the work that is needed since it would be too time-consuming to make the whole object from the start in front of the young couple and the wedding guests. Peeter stresses in the conversation the fact that each and every item is very personal: “All those horseshoes are personal – while I’m making them I’m thinking about the particular people they are for.”

Before the wedding guests arrive in July 2009, Peeter puts on a special costume – a shirt and trousers made of linen, knee-high leather boots and blacksmith’s apron made of brown leather. This is a costume that he only wears for demonstrations; even the leather apron is not needed all the time during his daily work (only when doing specific tasks). As Peeter himself has stressed many times to us, the most important part of his demonstration is storytelling. He starts with why the horseshoe has became the symbol of luck (since iron used to be considered very valuable material, finding a horseshoe for example was good fortune) and after that gives an overview of the history of the blacksmith’s work, stressing that he has already been doing this work for 20 years. While he tells the stories, the iron becomes hot enough so that the newlyweds can start hammering their names on the horseshoe – this is the most important part, because the main guests at the event are directly involved in the activity. After the names are hammered into the iron, Peeter asks the other guests if anyone would help with the date (but, this time no-one volunteers). Therefore he finishes the item by himself, raises it to the air to show it to the guests and asks them to follow him from the outdoor smithy to
the main smithy where he gives it the final touch and presents the item to the couple, saying: “Don’t try to change each other, try to change for each other. Should you ever experience hard times in your marriage, try to think of this day, think of this item that you made here together.” It’s obvious, that for him this is a highly emotional moment as well, since as he later says, every time he gives the horseshoe away, it makes him reflect on his own life and marriage as well.

Peeter’s living environment, i.e. his farm, the smithy he built himself and the activities performed there, form an important part of his self-perception and thereby his identity, and also serves as a basis for his interaction with tourists. His main taskscape – the smithy as a proper environment affording the performance of blacksmith’s work, and his farmstead and the surroundings that provide an appropriate rural context for it, is essential for him in order to share these affordances with his guests.

** TASKSCAPE: FARM ANIMALS ON THE FARMSTEAD **

The desire to experience personal interaction with animals plays an important role in (farm) tourism, whether these are traditional farm animals or recently introduced species in tourism farms. Although the primary function of the animals is no longer to afford sustenance, they are still considered quite significant and a necessary part of the farm environment by tourism farmers. The functions of the animals have transformed (for farmers as for tourists) recreational and emotional affordances, with the pleasure of watching the animals or interacting with them now being significant since the farmers tend to keep animals (some of them quite exotic) mainly as pets and for “recreational edutainment” (Hall et al. 2003: 91). Although many of the tourism farms we visited don’t keep farm animals themselves, they still consider animals to be an important part of the rural taskscape and rural experience. Animals may also become part of extended tasksapes – i.e. opportunities to visit production farms or other tourism farms in the neighbourhood that keep animals, thereby facilitating networking in the community (horses, especially horse riding, seem to be one of the most popular attractions).

Some of the tourism farmers we visited used to keep cows, pigs, etc., for milk and meat, although after the agricultural situation in Estonia changed they started keeping some of these animals just as “markers” of former farm life in order to maintain for their guests the affordance to interact with and watch them:

At first we had seven cows and pigs but then the dairy farming went down and we kept some just as a hobby. Now we have a cow, three sheep, a goat and a pig. And we also have dogs. (Luule, Mäe Farm, Rõuge)

Hall et al. (2003: 91) emphasise the importance of active participation (instead of the passive “gaze”), and of “connection, the degree to which a visitor is mentally absorbed or immersed – human interaction with animals offers an opportunity for a unique experience, and such an experience can provide the main objective of a visit or can be employed to transform positively recreational activities within a visitor attraction”.

Most of the visited tourist farms can be considered versatile tasksapes for such actions, where activities like touching and feeding the animals, horse riding or sledging, but also traditional farm works that include the animals, are afforded. A small variety
of traditional farm animals are kept on Mäe Farm, while sheep take care of landscape maintenance on Kiidi Farm, horses can be met on Suhka and Eha Farms and rabbits on Vaskna farm. In addition to various activities related to horses – one of the most popular tourist attractions in the region – other activities like milking cows seem to be fairly popular and was mentioned by several tourism farmers:

And a Swedish army major stayed here for twelve days. He milked the cow and everything. [...] We didn’t offer it, he insisted on it. So when I went to the cowshed to clean it up a bit half an hour before the time we had agreed on, he was already there. He was afraid that I would milk the cow myself and wouldn’t let him! (Margit, Vaskna Farm, Haanja)

Farm animals are not just a nice attraction for tourists; keeping animals on tourism farms can be considered part of the development of contemporary rural life. Aigar, one of the tourism farmers in Rõuge who is now leading the Heifer Project in Võru County, considers keeping animals and affording the possibility for tourists to experience encounters with (farm) animals on tourism farms to be a crucial part of the farm tourism experience. During the last 3–4 years several animals, for example goats, sheep (the most popular), horses and cows have been taken into both tourism farms and other households in Rõuge municipality. Aigar himself has Estonian Blackhead sheep on his farm and adds that via this project local rural traditions (like keeping sheep of an Estonian breed) have become valued again. In addition he can maintain his grasslands more easily, as mowing with a harvester is complicated on the hillside of his farm. The main principle of the Heifer Project is to give farmers animals free of charge on condition that they will give the offspring of these animals to other members of the local rural community without charge as well. Thereby not only is animal husbandry re-established as a taskscape in contemporary rural life but community ties and networking between locals are also facilitated.

However, not only traditional Estonian farm animals and pets are being kept on tourism farms, since farmers are very active in modifying and recreating their farm environments. Alar, for example, has introduced some new species – reindeer and ostriches – solely for their “exotic” value, therefore creating a new taskscape providing new rural experiences that are very different from the neighbouring ones:

At first they [the ostriches] were just a hobby. But then the people got curious and started to bother us: show them to us too, show them to us too. [...] So we started asking for a small symbolic fee for looking at them – let the ostriches earn their own living. But the reindeer are here because of a bet. I didn’t want to lose a bet so I brought them from Lapland myself. The fact that I have ostriches from the south and reindeer from the north living peacefully together here. [...] It’s very attractive to people. But it’s not animal husbandry; I don’t spend that much time doing it.

One could argue that animal husbandry forms an essential part of rural or farm identity for the tourism farmers, therefore all of them keep animals in one way or another. They keep traditional farm animals, pets, exotic animals, or extend their taskscape into other (tourism) farms if they do not own animals themselves. An important aspect of keeping animals is also landscape maintenance. Therefore we may say that by keeping (farm) animals, tourism farmers are recreating rural taskscape and reinforcing their rural identities.
Traditionally the forest was a public resource for the peasant community in Estonia, with important symbolic meanings in addition to being a practical taskscape (cf. Viires 2000: 15–17). The latter aspect is still important even today, as many tourism farmers (and other local inhabitants) get firewood from their forests, although the importance of recreational affordances of the forest has significantly increased.

The tourist’s encounter with environment is one of the key themes in rural tourism, although the degree to which these encounters are mediated and the extent to which the tourist is involved via certain activities varies. Due to their location, tourism farms in Rõuge and Haanja municipalities use the surrounding natural environments to varying degrees in order to provide their guests with different experiences. Almost all the interviewed farmers stressed the importance of the unique beauty and versatility of the nature of the area – its hills, lakes and forests – as part of the identity of the local people, as well as major tourist attractions. In terms of taskscape, lakes, hills and forests provide a lot of affordances that need not to be significantly re-designed by tourism farmers – they just had to fit the activities they offer into the existing environment, adding some social affordances for the tourists. Farmers as both taskscape experts and mediators are the ones who choose, sometimes establish, and suggest the routes for tourists to take and the sites to visit, acting as guides themselves at times or employing local people as guides for short hikes. Telling stories that introduce tourists to both the obsolete and present affordances of the environment during these hikes is an important part of the mediation practice.

In addition to enjoying nature in more passive ways, such as looking at a picturesque lake and sitting in peace, which is clearly something some tourists like to do, there are also several active forms of nature experience. Physical activities afforded by tourism farms unite the bodily senses through acts of moving in the environment (Lund 2005: 40). The heterogeneous landscape of Rõuge and Haanja stimulates manifold affordances for different physical activities, which vary seasonally (in summer hiking, walking, cycling, horse riding, boating, canoeing, swimming and fishing, etc.; in winter, in addition to hiking and walking, skiing, skating and sledging can be practised). Therefore, we can talk about the significant seasonality of possible taskscapes accessible to both hosts and guests in the Rõuge and Haanja region (cf. Palang et al. 2007).

At this point, we would like to focus on one-day hikes as a frequent example in several farms (these hikes are offered by four of the eight researched tourism farms). The hikes may last from one hour to eight hours and they are guided by a farmer, a member of his or her family or a local inhabitant. The hikes may be foot hikes or horse riding, rowing a boat, paddling a canoe, or skiing or some combination of these activities. Vello, the host at Eha Tourism Farm, for whom hiking has been a lifetime hobby, explains:

One thing that we offer here are day-hikes. They consist of different activities, such as horseriding, walking or a canoe trip. But quite often people are rather lazy, so they’re not very interested in walking, so we have to adjust these activities. We have to offer different things and be willing to change and modify them according to the wishes of the guests.

The role of the farmer as a mediator of the forest taskscape is most evident in these
guided tours, where tourists’ movements are ordered and commentaries introducing certain sites and objects are provided. However, there are different ways to guide tourists in natural environments, depending on the background and the aims of the tour guide. There is something unique about a personal local guide who can introduce to the tourist signs and affordances that are not visible to the foreign eye. These hikes, as actively performed and sensed bodily experiences, have the potential to educate urban people to the value of natural environments, not only as beautiful sights but also as habitats for various species, humans included.

For instance, a hike to the primeval valley of the Piusa River was guided by the host of Suhka Farm, Väle, in July 2009. He was born in the same village and therefore knows the surroundings intimately, and hikes may last from three or four hours to a whole day, depending on the guests’ wishes. Our hike started at six in the evening from the farmstead and the first path went near neighbours’ fields. Quite soon we entered a forest and almost immediately after that it started to rain. It was not an established hiking trail but a path that is known only to the locals and animals. Therefore we were busy bending back undergrowth branches, stepping over fallen trees and jumping across rivulets. In the high grass, our feet became wet, and we had to watch our step when we were further along because the path became muddy and slippery. Along the way, we made some short stops where Väle explained either obsolete cultural affordances from the past (the ruins of an old water-mill and a decayed small barn where local farmers used to keep their hay when they were taking it home during the winter); present taskscapes (a recent lumbering area belonging to a local farmer, special spots for picking chantarelles that are known only to the locals, the lake where he used to go fishing with his father when he was a child); or natural taskscapes around us (beaver dams and dens by the riverside). Väle was a discreet guide who gave only modest and short explanations, leaving time and space for the guests to explore the environment themselves. He chose a different way for the return trip and we got back at ten in the evening, when all of us had a chance to use the taskscape of the Suhka Farm smoke sauna in order to warm our bodies, which were soaking wet.

Rural environments are heterogeneous, involving both natural and cultural affordances, however, in the tourism farms we researched, the importance of natural affordances was stressed more by the farmers themselves, who provide or suggest to their guests various outdoor activities. The nature tourism experience is the crucial part of the overall farm tourism experience at Rõuge and Haanja, involving affordances of natural environments as tourist attractions. Thereby tourism farmers make their farmsteads extended rural taskscapes and often introduce their guests the same affordances they use in their everyday lives. Several farmers (usually the host him or herself) act as guides on short hikes provided by the farm, thereby mediating nature-tourist encounters in a personal way, bringing their guests to places they favour, to places that form a crucial part of the farmers’ identities.

**TASKSCAPE: TAKING A SAUNA**

Taking a sauna – the practice of sweating and beating oneself with whisks (whisking) of leafy birch twigs in hot rooms that are heated by large stones on stoves that produce
stream – is an old tradition for Estonians (and for many other Finno-Ugric peoples, such as Finns, Ingrins, Votians, Livonians, Komis, Maris, Mordvins, etc.). The sauna, or *saun* as it is called in Estonian, plays a central role in the lives of individuals in Estonia. Traditionally the taskscape of the sauna was much more versatile than today. In Estonian folk tradition, saunas were believed to be sacred places inhabited by spirits; it was not just the place where people washed themselves, but where women would give birth, where illnesses were cured, where the bride was taken ritually before the wedding (see Habicht 2008); as well as being used for practical purposes such as smoking meat, drying small amounts of crops, etc. Therefore, several embodied activities are related to the sauna, making it an active and practical multisensory experience involving the whole body. As Veijola and Jokinen (1994: 140) suggest, “when one hears, sees, smells, senses and tastes, thoughts may wander around and emotions vary, but a person has become a part of the unity, becomes a participant”.

In the tourism farms of Rõuge and Haanja, one can find a wide array of different saunas: renovated saunas that were originally built at the end of 19th century, or newer saunas built during the 20th or 21st century. Through the course of the 20th century, the sauna remained, and is today, an integral part of the Estonian lifestyle, as most summer homes had saunas: separate buildings in farmhouses and new, “Finnish-type” saunas in the summerhouse regions. The main affordances of the sauna as a taskscape – a place for sweating and washing – have remained the same, while at the same time they have been transformed into affordances related more with social and leisure activities (different informal social gatherings).

The sauna culture has changed in time but the fact that there are no tourism farms without saunas suggests the continuing importance of the sauna in Estonians rural life and as part of the taskscape of tourism farmers. As contrasted with those of the natural affordances of the forest that the tourism farmer can make use of, the sauna is an environment that is totally designed by farmers themselves and the sets of affordances of saunas depend on the creativity of the farmer. The tourism farmers use their imagination to create different kinds of saunas and offer varied sauna experiences for their guests using different, and creative, strategies.

Peeter, for example, has rebuilt an old granary into a smoke sauna and set it in his yard next to a big wooden “hot tub” (a barrel with its own heating system for the water) and a traditional Estonian swing. He has transformed the taskscape of an old granary into a new one, with affordances useful for himself as well as his guests (he heats the sauna for his family every Friday and for his guests when they have booked it; the pond next to the sauna is crucial for Peeter as it affords a method of cooling down when taking a sauna). In the wintertime a “hot tub” sauna affords, for example, an experience of bathing in hot water while being outdoors in cold weather. On Vaskna Farm, in addition to the regular sauna, Ahti and Margit have a small barrel-shaped sauna right next to the lake, which they regard as “more thrilling” because it does not have electricity or any washing facilities and the guests can run straight into the lake from the sauna. This latter sauna with its simple affordances can be related to the more archaic and nostalgic sauna experience. Väle and Merike own an old smoke sauna next to a pond, built at the beginning of the 20th century, which is not merely a washing facility, as visiting this taskscape affords the guest various physical and mental experiences. The sauna is located a short walk from the house and if the guests have not visited the sauna before

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they are taken there by Väle, who explains the details on the way and while in the sauna. Aigar built his sauna himself some years ago and most important for him is to introduce the wide array of activities that can be practised in a sauna (whisks made of different trees; herbal extracts that can be added to the sauna water; various massages). He tries to introduce traditional Estonian sauna culture in this taskscape and also creates new traditions of his own. Quite often, Aigar takes a sauna together with his guests, especially when explaining sauna traditions and customs to guests who are not familiar with them. He introduces different activities that can be performed there and gives advice on how to behave and what exactly to do in the sauna:

So we have massages with honey, scrubbings with salt and whatnot and I’ve promoted not washing yourself with shampoo or shower gel – let your skin have the opportunity to breathe.

Alar has built an “Indian sauna”, which for him means heating up stones and placing a tent above them (he has creatively adapted the authentic Indian sauna according to his ideas). His completely novel sauna taskscape is very popular among his visitors:

But when the customers come and try it, they definitely come back for more. Whoever tries it, will immediately start to like it. Generally of course people don’t want to go to a sauna where there’s a floor made of a groundsheet and hay, they think it’s no good. [...] But you have to bring people to that kind of stadium then he will agree to try. When I have two saunas heated up together, then they use the regular one just for washing afterwards.

This sauna taskscape is a deliberately designed to be exotic and different from the traditional or familiar rural sauna taskscapes on other tourism farms.

The sauna is an experience that unites bodily and mental experiences. Taking a sauna is also an important activity for tourism farmers themselves having more than just a practical meaning. By designing and mediating sauna taskscapes they share some aspects of their everyday identity with tourists. The environment that surrounds the sauna building becomes an extension of the taskscape affording additional outdoor activities (swimming in a lake or in a pond, running into the snow, sitting on a terrace while cooling down). In sum we may say that while creating sauna taskscapes tourism farmers realise their personal creativity related to their living environment and thereby their identity.

CONCLUSION

Rural environments are complex and dynamic consisting of both natural and cultural elements and various sets of affordances that can be viewed as taskscapes. Our research demonstrated that tourism farmers of Rõuge and Haanja use the potential of their living environment for offering different activities that can be practised in their farms and in the surroundings. In the first part of our paper we proposed an ecological perspective that considers the living environment of tourism farms perceived through a set of affordances and activities that form certain taskscapes. These activities, as part of taskscapes, may become a significant component of individual rural identities.
We suggested that tourism farmers as individuals perceive their living environment as one of the important aspects of their identity which in turn serves as a basis for their interaction with tourists. The tourism farmers of the researched regions creatively use the perceptual and interactional potentiality of an environment they have either designed themselves, or mediate via their different cognitive competencies to the tourists. Thereby, tourism farmers can provide novel affordances to their guests in addition to those affordances their guests are already able to expect and thus detect immediately. Relying on the studied examples we argued that tourism farmers from Rõuge and Haanja constantly work out new activities that can be performed in farms and their surroundings, thus extending their taskscapes to other farms and to other areas when possible and necessary.

This study showed that tourism farms are not just environments designed for tourists’ activities and experiences; they are also everyday lived environments for the tourism farmers themselves. Farm tourism activity is primarily a lifestyle enterprise for the farmers we interviewed, thereby it was possible to detect some aspects of their identities by researching the taskscapes they inhabit and provide to their guests. Every farm we visited offers experiences that are important to the farmer and his or her family. We found that tourism farmers clearly see their role as mediators of local culture and nature introducing the taskscapes of their farmsteads as well as surroundings through interaction with animals and activities such as hikes.

The second part of the article was focused on the analysis of particular taskscapes in tourism farms as they are related to current individual rural identities. The living environment of a blacksmith in Rõuge, including a smithy as his main taskspace and the craft-related activities performed there, form an important part of his self-perception and thereby his identity, and serves as a basis for his interaction with tourists. We discovered that animal husbandry seems to form an essential part of rural identity for tourism farmers as all of them keep animals in one way or another (some exotic animals in addition to traditional farm animals and pets). Furthermore, animal-related taskscapes may be extended involving other (tourism) farms if a particular farm does not have animals of its own. Keeping (farm) animals in tourism farms seems to recreate rural taskscapes and reinforce the rural identities of tourism farmers. The fact that the nature tourism experience is a crucial part of the overall farm tourism experience at Rõuge and Haanja was also shown. Manifold affordances of natural environments were involved as tourist attractions. The importance of natural affordances was stressed by the farmers themselves, who provide, or suggest to their guests, various outdoor activities. Several farmers (usually the host in person) act as guides on short hikes provided by the farm, thereby mediating nature-tourist encounters in a personal way, bringing their guests to places they favour, places that form a crucial part of their own identities. The last example – the sauna – turned out to be a heterogeneous taskspace as there are multiple different saunas available for guests in the tourism farms researched (in addition to smoke sauna as a speciality of the region). In the cases examined the environment that surrounds the sauna building becomes an important extension of the cultural taskspace, affording additional outdoor activities. Taking a sauna is also an important activity for the tourism farmers themselves who, using their personal creativity, design and mediate sauna taskscapes in various ways to the tourists.

In conclusion we suggest that the analysis of these taskscapes – a blacksmith’s farm,
(farm) animals, the forest in the vicinity, the sauna in the farmstead – demonstrated that the creative and extended use of different types of affordances of their living environment plays an important role in the formation of the rural identities of tourism farmers. Furthermore, extended rural taskscapes seem to emerge from the ways tourism farmers design and mediate their living environment by creating new rural practices. This in turn may influence the perception of contemporary rural identities and rurality in general, not just for tourists but also for other community members in the region. Further comparative research might explore how taskscapes of other inhabitants of the region and rural identities related with these might be connected to the current rural identities associated with farm tourism activities.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Emanuele Bardone from the University of Pavia, Italy, for his kind suggestions and feedback on the application of the theories of affordances and taskscapes in the present context.

NOTES

1 Though, one must admit that the meaning of the concept “farm tourism” varies over time due to the development of the farm tourism practice itself, as well as the differences between countries; in addition, farm tourism practice is comprised of a vast range of activities that have no common denominator (Busby, Rendle 2000: 635). We use the concepts of “tourism farmer” and “tourism farms” to emphasise that the farms we researched produce no agricultural goods, but specialise in tourism activities solely. “Tourism farm” is also the term used by the NGO Estonian Rural Tourism.

2 In the cases of Rõuge, Haanja and the Võru region in general, we must add that there is also a recognisable ethnic/cultural dimension to regional identity that is mainly realised in (a) regional dialect/s that form an important everyday basis for the local identity of the tourism farmers as well as other inhabitants.

3 The term “ecological” in the present paper does not refer to ecological tourism in terms of sustainability but rather from an epistemological perspective originating from the works on ecological psychology (originating from the works of James J. Gibson) related to environmental perception and cognition. This approach sees the individual as “the situated perceiver” emphasising the “mutuality of the perceiving organism and environment, the reciprocity of perception and action, and a form of direct perception in which suitably equipped perceivers pick up information specific to its source” (Good 2007: 268–269).

4 There is no doubt that local identity as a collective construct is always contested as it is both ecological and a social process involving several dimensions (not just the environmental), different participating agents (local inhabitants, policymakers, etc.) and practices (economic, political, etc.) (Paasi 2003: 477).

5 We collected our data during three field trips to Rõuge and Haanja municipalities, situated in Võru County, in south-east Estonia (in July and September 2008, and July 2009). All interviews with tourism farmers were conducted and recorded by us; transcripts are in our possession.

6 On this topic, see Jääts 2008.

7 The notion “guest” is used synonymously with the notion “tourist” following the tradition from the literature on tourism anthropology.
“Rural tourism” is another problematic concept as it is often defined as tourism that takes place in the countryside, whereas rural areas or countryside are themselves difficult to define and the criteria used by different nations vary considerably (Roberts, Hall 2001; Sharpley 2004; Lane 2009).

Considering different practices in different countries the distinction can be made between (1) farm-based tourism, holiday farms or agritourism (which includes farm holidays on a working farm where tourism is a supplemental activity) and (2) farm tourism or tourism farms specialising solely in tourism (these farms provide accommodation, catering and usually some other services related to recreation and/or experience tourism in rural areas) (see Busby, Rendle 2000; Roberts, Hall 2001; Hall et al. 2008: 117–121). Farm tourism in Estonia is predominantly of the second type, in the sense that a few or almost no working farm elements are involved in the enterprises (yet, pluriactivity is common, as in other countries, because farm tourism is usually a small scale enterprise and highly seasonal). In 2002, only 13.3 per cent of rural tourism accommodation also offered farm work participation (see Rural Tourism International). The reason for this might be that many Estonians, as domestic tourists, still have a certain connection with farm work (i.e. from their childhood or from visiting parents or grandparents who live in the countryside) and therefore do not consider it to be an attraction. The Tourism Law of Estonia (2005) permits the use of the word turismitalu (tourism farm) in designating a “bed and breakfast” type of enterprise (a guesthouse, hostel, holiday village, etc.) located in a rural area. Hence, the law does not prescribe that an enterprise called a tourism farm should have any connection to a farm household at all. Therefore, it largely depends on the particular tourism entrepreneur’s concept of what is farm-like.

All tourism farms researched are situated in the territory of the Haanja Nature Park and maintenance of some of the lands that belong to the tourism farmers is supported by agricultural funds of the European Union (e.g. the PHARE programme).

We owe this distinction to Emanuele Bardone.

The distinction between “concealed” and “visible” affordances was made by Rajala (2004: 394–395).

We are grateful to Emanuele Bardone for helping to work out this specification.

Lorenzo Magnani and Emanuele Bardone (2008) argue that “a cognitive niche emerges from a network of continuous interplays between individuals and the environment, in which people alter and modify the environment by mimetically externalizing fleeting thoughts, private ideas, etc., into external supports”.

We thank Emanuele Bardone for proposing this term.

The research conducted for the Estonian Rural Tourism Development Plan (for 2004–2007) demonstrated that 86 per cent of the visitors to rural enterprises (including tourism farms) are domestic tourists. Foreign tourists mainly come from Latvia, Finland, Sweden and Germany, and only a few from other countries.

The Haanja Nature Park (with an area of 16,903 hectares) is a member of the European Natura 2000 network. See also Haanja County Compass.

The most up-to-date information about activities available can be found in the Estonian Travel Guide: Holiday in the Countryside (2009), published by the NGO Estonian Rural Tourism.

See Heifer International.

The community based in Võru County, who share animals taken via the Heifer Project, has a weblog for the purposes of sharing information (see Võromaa Heifer).

Yet, they admit that what is considered beautiful by the tourist was once a challenge for local farmers, who had to cultivate and harvest these hilled landscapes – the production was unprofitable due to the high costs of fuel (tractors consumed extra fuel when driving uphill). That is one of the main reasons why farmers who are now involved in tourism have quit agricultural activities.
This summer one of us attended a short hike with him as a guide, as a part of a small group of guests.

SOURCES

Interviews conducted in tourism farms in Rõuge and Haanja municipalities during July and September 2008 and July 2009. (In the possession of the authors.)

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ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE LILLEORU COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the raison d’être of the only proper Estonian ecovillage, Lilleoru. Exceptional in the Estonian context, this relatively small and young community is a member of three established international networks uniting similar communities. Based on fieldwork and ethnographic interviews, the present article describes some focal aspects of the community and investigates how Lilleoru functions as a community. After a brief overview of the formation of the community, the following questions are touched upon: what is its significance for its members, how are they differentiated from other similar groups, what creates coherence among its members, how is the community managed, what are the everyday practices and how does it fit into the global context. As a result of the study it might be said that although from the outside Lilleoru is mainly seen as an ecovillage, from inside being an awareness training centre is central. The ecological lifestyle is regarded as a side result of a conscious lifestyle.

KEYWORDS: community • identity • lifestyle • rituals • holism

I have a general idea about their life and some acquaintance with their language, and if I can only somehow document all this, I’ll have valuable material.
Bronislaw Malinowski (Wolcott 2001: 63)

Throughout time mankind has imagined alternative ways of living – both better and worse than their present surroundings. Until the 19th century these visions existed primarily in the form of texts. Since then realising the masterplans for creating a better society in real life in forms of both secular and spiritual communities became more popular. Interest in exploring the dependence of social circumstances on the programmatic blueprints led me to study the only proper ecovillage in Estonia – the Lilleoru community. Based on my fieldwork1 and ethnographic interviews with community members2 the present article describes fundamental aspects of the community and analyses how Lilleoru functions as a community, what are its everyday practices, what is its meaning for its members and how it fits into the global context.
WHAT IS LILLEORU?

In many ways Lilleoru is something unique in the Estonian context. Depending on viewpoint it can be described as a home place for people sharing a common worldview and lifestyle, as a vigorous and growing ecovillage, as a strong community and thus a good example of civic initiative, as an awareness training centre, as a centre for practising self-development techniques from different traditions, as well as a yogic community that is a partner in two global networks of spiritual shrines (ashrams). As a living and growing community it is in a constant state of change and the aim of this paper is not to try to define or label it. This article proceeds rather from the viewpoint that a community as a whole cannot be defined solely by socio-geographical, economic or purely cultural indicators, but rather as a dynamical relationship between these components.

The community started to develop in 1992 around a raja and buddhi yoga teacher Ishwarananda (male, 1962), who started giving classes in Tallinn. A small group emerged who started visiting Lilleoru to help the teacher with preparations for building a home for his family. In the course of the preparations Lilleoru developed into and became a midpoint for the growing community instead. Meetings in Lilleoru took place primarily on weekends. There was no infrastructure and the area needed amelioration as it was wet and bosky. Recollecting the beginning of the community the initial community members use words like “wild”, “spontaneous” and “exciting”.

Over the years the initial spontaneity has gradually become more and more ordered, which is typical in the case of growing groups. In addition to common yoga practices, the people involved started to do other things together – from taking courses in ecological farming to building houses for common use. In 1995 the first house was finished and a few people started regularly living at Lilleoru. During that time regular summer-camps started. In connection to the growth of the community and especially organising the camps in which approximately 100 people took part, the need for coordination increased. In 1999, seven years after setting out, the first official administrative body was created in Lilleoru. Since 2000 a more open and active approach was taken and some of the community’s activities were aimed at those outside. For example regular practices in Tallinn, which ended in the middle of the 1990s, started again. New directions of activities were also taken up, for example cultivating herbs and creating curing herbal tea mixtures, as well as publishing books and teaching hatha yoga across Estonia. The Lilleoru non-governmental organisation (NGO Lilleoru) was founded in 2001 for the official operation of Lilleoru and better management of the organisation. Lilleoru NGO owns and governs the whole territory and buildings in Lilleoru and is the organiser of most of the events going on there. The NGO works for public interests and through the statutes its declared aim is to contribute to the development of personal integrity by offering possibilities for learning, and by creating conditions favouring this development (NGO Lilleoru Community).

Becoming an Ecovillage

Interest in becoming an ecovillage arose at the end of the 1990s. As community members wanted to move to Lilleoru, a dwelling house for 10 people was built in 2003. Inter-
viewed community members often found that ecological lifestyle comes naturally with conscious way of living.

Tara: I think the popularity comes with changing awareness. People realise that it is much more sparing to live together – it also spares time so that there might be more time to look inside yourself, to see other values in life.

Kripa Ram: In 2004 questions about how and where the living area could be built were raised. Eco came in the course of these discussions – it is popular and matches the principles of Lilleoru.

As the wish of community members to start dwelling in Lilleoru was firm, planning of the Skyearth ecovillage started in 2004. Since 2006 Lilleoru has belonged to the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). A building permit was given in the summer of 2008 and a year after that the first houses were already completed up to roof level. All in all there will be approximately 100 people living in the village.

All the interviewed community members regarded an ecological lifestyle as important and considered it an inherent result of a consciously lived life.

Anjani: If you are in harmony with yourself, then you don't take or use more than you need. You are in fact more economical.

By some community members notions “ecological” and “economical” were used as synonyms.

Subsistence

In the middle of the 1990s there was a thorough discussion and it was decided that in order to finance Lilleoru, a voluntary tenth had to be established. Participants donated 1/10 of their income each month to the common budget. When the NGO was founded, this fee changed into a voluntary membership payment, calculated taking fixed costs into account (water, electricity, etc.). In addition to donations an important source of income are books published by Lilleoru and various training courses organised in Lilleoru and other places across Estonia.

Most community members living in Lilleoru work in Tallinn. With the help of projects funded by the European Union, new workplaces (primarily connected to various training courses – from ecological building to painting, arts and handycraft) are planned to be created in Lilleoru in the near future. As voluntary work for the good of the community is the biggest power behind development of Lilleoru, it largely depends on the input of time and skills by community members.

Place and Space

Space is a practiced place.
Michel de Certeau (1984: 117)

Places connected to Lilleoru can be found across Estonia – regular activities take place in the towns of Jõgeva, Pärnu, Rakvere, Tallinn, Tartu, Viljandi and Kilingi-Nõmme, as
As in the settlements of Jüri and Vaida. However, there is one distinct midpoint, a place that is indeed also a space in Certeau’s terms – Lilleoru centre.

Lilleoru is located on the countryside of northern Estonia, 20 minutes from, and to the south of, the capital Tallinn. During the 17 years of its existence Lilleoru has evolved from a place into an elaborate space. From a wet and bushy territory members of the community have built a well maintained park, garden and living environment, which can generally be divided into two: the ecovillage (living space) and the open training centre (teaching and learning space). According to community members, the formation of Lilleoru’s territory depends largely on practical needs and the unanimity principle – decisions about organising space and erecting new buildings are settled by the members’ general assembly.

From the inside (emic view) Lilleoru is seen as a very special space. Lilleoru is characterised as “holy/sacred”, admitting at the same time that this is a relative term, dependent on each person, their values and worldview.

Tara: What is sacred depends on the meaning we ourselves give to a place. [...] A place becomes sacred if you actually experience some energy there and see the reaction it creates in you.

Holy places are regarded as mirroring the inner world in the outer world. Although something might be invisible, it might still exist, having value and importance.

Kashturi: If I don’t see the air, I can’t say that there is no air. I can’t say that there’s nobody, if I’m not able to measure their weight for example. Or colour them. My limitedness shouldn’t rule out the existence of something.

Understanding what is sacred in Lilleoru can be aided by reference to Mircea Eliade’s view that the sacred is something *sui generis* which cannot be reduced to profane explanations and which is characterised by an unique element – holiness (Gross 2008: 645).

Taking regularity as a criterion for rituals, there are many rituals to be found in Lilleoru. There is a certain rhythm within the year, within the week and within the day. Winter and summer camps have been held on a regular basis since the beginning of the community, autumn and spring camps began when Lilleoru became an *ashram* in 2002. With the new status came new ceremonies (*aarati* and *havan*) and places (producing sacred spaces) like the temple, altar, winter and summer *dhuni* (place for fire ceremonies). Through the ritual practices that make Lilleoru a sacred space the village is connected to many different places across the globe, from northern India to Switzerland by Haidakhand Babaji’s line of teaching, and from southern India to Canada by Kriya Babaji’s lineage. Rituals are perceived as a way to contact the elemental forces of nature. On different occasions different rituals are used as tools to achieve certain results and changes.

Nandi Devar: Govindan said once that ritual might be like a telephone number of an energy, whom you want to contact. But you have to be aware while dialling. If you are too random, you’ll get a false connection or you won’t get a connection at all.

Kripa Ram: Man needs ceremonies. Without a form it is fairly difficult to proceed in the beginning. If you learn to concentrate, you’ll discover that form is accompanied
by the formless. Form helps to concentrate. The experiences are at first emotional, mental, later you’ll start discovering that there’s something more. If you discover that, emotions are left aside. It might take a long time.

So rituals are perceived as practical actions, not actions that belong to the sphere of faith or magic. The results of rituals are seen as dependent on the awareness and goals of the person performing them.

**COMMUNITY AND ITS PERCEPTIONS**

The purpose of community studies is widely seen as investigating the role of local relationships in person’s life. Social anthropologist Nigel Rapport concedes that although the concept of “community” has been one of most widely and frequently used in social sciences through the last 200 years, no generally acknowledged definition has emerged (Barnard 1996: 114–117). He remarks that the definition made by Robert Redfield in 1947 is still one of the most used. Are the 4 following criteria posed by Redfield fit to describe Lilleoru?

- Relative smallness on the social scale.

Lilleoru community started in 1992 with about ten persons and about 6–7 of them are still active members today. How many members Lilleoru community has today is a far more difficult question. How to define members? Are they people who are members of the Lilleoru NGO? Or are they people who visit Lilleoru on a regular basis? Are people who live in faraway places and visit seldom, but listen to the lecture recordings of the teacher and perform practices received from Lilleoru, also members? Taking into account the people visiting Lilleoru, then according to the reckoning of Lilleoru’s accountant there are about 40 people with a more accountable role, about 60–80 who visit regularly and about 300 who visit more randomly. In a year approximately 1500 people visit Lilleoru. This criterion is therefore fit to describe Lilleoru.

- Homogeneity in the actions and states of mind of the members.

What unites people from various social backgrounds, ages and interests from all over Estonia (and also abroad) into a coherent community? In addition to solidarity and closeness, which emerges between people visiting Lilleoru on a regular basis, two aspects that create coherence are emphasised by the interviewees. Firstly taking care of Lilleoru as a place (building, developing, maintaining) and secondly participating in practices that make it a space (activities connected to teaching).

Aradhana: People who see Ishwarananda’s teaching as important are the ones who become regulars.

Ishwarananda: I find that community members are those people who feel that this knowledge or this place is more or less important to them.

Existing as a community and working together are seen as important means of facilitating the processes of getting to know oneself. Working and living together bring forth many concepts (I’m better then them, he doesn’t know anything, etc.) and emotions
anger, greed, inferiority, fear, etc.), which can be disposed of using yogic techniques. On the other hand living and working in a community is a good way of sharing positive emotions. In addition it is easy to learn to do things selflessly for others without expecting some bonus or prize in a community which combines many different people. This criterion is therefore fit to describe Lilleoru.

- Awareness of their differences from other groups.

The repeated answer to the question, what differentiates Lilleoru from other ecological communities, was – the teacher and the teaching.

Aradhana: Teacher and teaching are simply the core, the reason why all the other things exist in Lilleoru. It all starts from that.

There is a clear distinction in the practice of Lilleorians between “us” and “them”, although the borders are not tangible and are located in the inner world (space, i.e. practised place) of each human being. According to community members the major identity-builder and discriminator between “own” and “alien” is the higher level of self-awareness of Lilleorians. Also being more honest (being aware of ones motives) and present in the moment (not proceeding from past memories or hopes for the future) are features which were brought up as characteristics of people connected to Lilleoru.

While studying the Lilleoru community Anthony P. Cohen’s approach to community studies proved useful. In his book The Symbolic Construction of Community (1985) he stated that the basis for a community is created through shared symbols: community members create the symbolic structure of their community and its borders. The fact that the meanings of the symbols can be different for community members does not pose an obstacle in being a coherent community (Cohen 1992: 57). Cohen states that as the borders between communities are today symbolic and mental rather than physical or geographical, they might also be more difficult to discover (especially when looking from the outside) (ibid.: 37). According to Cohen membership status does not depend so much on the behaviour and actions as on the connectedness with the shared set of symbols, the shared vocabulary of values.

This criterion is therefore fit to describe Lilleoru.

- Relatively sustainable and independent from outside resources.

This is the weakest link in Lilleoru at the moment. As it is still a young community it is not yet very self-sufficient. Workplaces are generally located in Tallinn. There are plans to make Lilleoru more independent, but they await initial financing from outside.

Roles in the Community

Lilleoru is a community centre that has evolved around a teacher and his teachings. Space and community activities are organised according to the teaching, but not according to the words and decisions of the teacher, rather as a result of common decisions. Decision making in Lilleoru is split-level. Most important decisions are made by a board that has been selected by the members’ general assembly for three years. On the other side these decisions are generally discussed with the teacher, who might have
a different view on how it would be best to proceed. Final decisions are mainly made through a consensus of the board members.

All roles are voluntary. According to community members, the membership of the board is shaped by the willingness to participate and take responsibility – there are people who are ready to take the role of the leader and people who prefer to work in the garden. There are three main ways of assuming a role in Lilleoru:

- People wish to participate in certain activities (personal initiative).
- Someone’s help is needed in certain activities (invitation).
- The teacher points at a role for developmental reasons (mission is given).

Community members don’t see any hierarchy in their community. They point out that the organisation and the board are important to ensure that everything works out in a clear and well organised way.

At the beginning of the research, based on media texts and the Lilleoru home-page, I had expected to find a more rhizome structured community, but participatory field-work and interviews (emic view) revealed the centered structure (around the teacher) of the Lilleoru community, which I hadn’t been able to perceive from the outside (etic view). The existence of a teacher and a board already indicates a certain hierarchy.

Rules

The people interviewed agreed that rules are necessary in order to cope with the management of a growing community. In the Lilleoru community there are no rules of admission or probation, nobody is asked to declare faith in anything, but there are some regulations, which are expected to be followed. Rules that are presently valid come from the end of 1990s and are being updated. Rules are made with the purpose of facilitating the everyday operating in Lilleoru.

There have been attempts to create a ground-learning course for beginners, but it didn’t work out so now newcomers are introduced to the rules in practice, spontaneously, primarily through asking. Many people first come to Lilleoru during camp (spring, summer, autumn, winter) and as the daily schedule applies to everybody, the rules will become known in a shorter time than for the people who come during the weekends.

It is recommended to follow the rules fixed by the daily timetable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>Aarati7</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>Light breakfast and tea/coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00–12.00</td>
<td>Karma yoga8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00–13.00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00–14.00</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.00–18.00</td>
<td>Karma yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>Sauna and dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>Aarati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The schedule has small changes depending on the season. At the weekends there is a lecture by teacher Ishwarananda in the evenings instead of aarati and during the camps there is a lecture by him daily in the evenings. During the camps hatha yoga practices also take place daily in the morning before karma yoga.

While doing fieldwork in Lilleoru I noticed three types of rules: stricter rules for those living in Lilleoru ashram, loosier for those living in the Dwelling House and going to work in Tallinn and even loosier for those who are visiting. Community members agreed with this classification, admitting that there should be in fact only one type of rule – ashram rules – applying to everybody. The reason why this is not so, is that people like convenience and cling to their habits and many would abandon the yogic path if they had to follow ashram rules, which require more discipline.

Ishwarananda: Our aim is not to create a military order, which would frighten people away. At the same time we shouldn’t be too liberal, allowing everybody to do what they want to do. This is the tricky part. [...] It should be an open place, benevolent and welcoming, well organised, but not over regulated.

In general rules are flexible in Lilleoru. For example rules connected to food. Vegetarian food is prepared two times a day for everybody. Meat is not prepared for common meals, but one can eat it if they please, it is not forbidden. But drugs are completely forbidden as they hinder the attainment of the goal of being aware of yourself. Drugs alter the state of consciousness not according to your will, but independent of it, so they are not useful for achieving the main goal.

Another important rule is to be tolerant and respectful towards yourself and others. This also means that one should not criticise oneself or others. If you find something you dislike, look inside yourself and ask why it bothers you – do you need this emotion/concept? One of the main principles in Lilleoru is to change yourself before trying to change others. Slandering and criticising others or yourself is seen as useless and is thus not favoured.

TEACHING IN LILLEORU

During their 17 years of existence, yogic practices have been central in Lilleoru. But as the methods of raja and buddhi yoga (which presuppose good skills of concentration and awareness) proved to be too elusive for the majority of pupils, many different flows of spiritual practices have been used in Lilleoru (including Native American, Buddhist, Dzogchen, Hindu traditions). In 2002 Lilleoru became a member of the Haidakhan Babaji line and in 2004 Babaji’s Kriya Yoga line. Why such faraway methods? To the question why use Indian traditions in Estonia, teacher Ishwarananda replied:

Hinduism has preserved an exact description of the man, the universe, the world and how it all fits together. It is possible to use it with high efficiency. It is like a good manual, which can be browsed in order to change yourself.

Although these methods stem from India, they have been adapted to Western understanding and environment – they have creolised. In accordance with easternisation of the west, a holistic view of the world is gaining more and more popularity – traditional
occidental dualism is replaced with unity (Altnurme 2005: 44). The truth is seen as universal – not high and alien, but inherent and close to all people.

It is important to note, that the understanding of human beings in Lilleoru is completely different from the ordinary concept and therefore values and goals are also different. According to the Lilleoru (yogic) view a human being consists of 5 bodies: physical, emotional, mental (memory, thoughts, imagination), intellectual (intuition, insights) and self. The last body (self) is considered to be the real you.

Teaching functions on two levels. On the first level are people who are interested in yoga as a means of facilitating everyday life, and on the second level those who have dedicated themselves to following a yogic way of life. On both occasions conscious self-observation is a starting point that helps a person to realise what motives, habits, concepts, thoughts and emotions rule their everyday actions. On the first level one learns to know and steer one’s inner processes. The yogic methods gives one the possibility to mould oneself (the ego) easily according to present needs to improve the quality of life. The second level sets as its goal the achievement of independence from the ego (a certain set of emotions and thoughts that is constantly used) and to understand how causality (karma) works. The goal of life is to stop identifying oneself with the rest of the (both inner and outer) objects and learn to stay identified with the fifth body, self. In order to achieve these goals a certain set of activities is performed on a regular basis.

Inward activities:

- Regular yogic practices – meditations, etc.
- Differentiation – noticing the inner and outer processes that affect a person and learning to know them. Understanding causes and effects and, through this, becoming more aware.
- Defamiliarisation – deautomatisation of the habitual and customary and, through this, becoming more aware.
- Withdrawal – letting go of needless and useless actions, values, standpoints, thoughts, emotions, reactions, habits, and through this becoming more aware.

Outward activities:

- Regular yogic practices – hatha yoga, etc.
- Shared activities in the community, voluntary work for the common good (karma yoga).
- Wage labour.
- Conscious participation in rituals (aarati, havan).

New Age and Lilleoru

In the Estonian context Lilleoru has gained public attention mainly as an innovative and growing ecovillage, a little less so as a centre of alternative spirituality. What does this mean – alternative spirituality? Since the beginning, different practices from different parts and ages of the world have been used in Lilleoru, which in the context of Estonia is rather unusual – i.e. alternative. Why talk about spirituality or New Age philosophy and not religion or faith? Both the New Age approach and religion are symbol sys-
tems, but they are essentially different: religion is something fixed that strives to signify something absolute and true (Geertz 1990: 2303); New Age is something more rhizomic, experience-based, more personal (Altnurme 2005: 44). When spirituality emphasises personal experience, faith emphasises the creed. New Age regards different practices as interchangeable tools, which are to be used to achieve certain goals, while religion sees them rather as inviolable dogmas, which are to be believed in. Religion mainly has holy texts as the source of authority, New Age does not have such core texts, although it has a certain set of repeating elements and it cannot be called a random melting pot of different spiritual traditions (Tago 2009: 47–48).

New Age is not a random complex of practices, rather a certain type of cultural text shaped by creolisation of cultural languages. In Lilleoru there is a selector – teacher – who chooses and adds techniques and thus facilitates the growth of independence (autonomy) of Lilleoru as a cultural text.

In everyday use the term “New Age” has different connotations. Community members generally rejected use of this term about the Lilleoru community because to them it is associated with a hippy lifestyle, which they perceived as distant and alien from their own.

Ishwarananda: If you look at the content, then you see that there are very old truths, that it is difficult to call it New Age. Old age perhaps. There is nothing new there practically, this knowledge is ancient.

Traditions practised in Lilleoru are old in the global context, but new in Estonia. New Age has been defined differently – in the present article it is understood as a syncretic spirituality, which is new in a certain cultural sphere. Thus it can be said that Christianity was New Age in 13th century Estonia, as Buddhism, Hinduism or native American traditions are New Age in the context of 21st century. The knowledge might be ancient, but it is new in a certain cultural context.

There is a lot of tolerance in Lilleoru for choosing one’s practices according to one’s needs and experience. Holistic spirituality is doubtlessly practised there. So I find that Lilleoru is a New Age community. This is in accordance with the view of Christoph Bochinger, who finds that New Age groups represent by structure very modern types of religiousness or spirituality as they encourage people to choose and combine different elements according to their experiences, not according to the dogmas of certain traditions (2005: 71). He concedes that as a general name holism can be used to designate New Age (ibid.: 72). As Lilleorians agree rather with the description “holistic” than with “New age” about their community, the first term will be thus used in this article from this point on.

*Lilleoru in the Global Context*

The great majority of communities at the beginning of 21st century are intentional communities. The creation of intentional communities became more popular in the 1960s and 1970s and although most of the attempts remained short-lived, there are exceptions (Bang 2007).

According to the definition given by the Global Ecovillage Network (The Ecovillage Concept) ecovillages can have a cultural/spiritual, ecological or social dominant. The
Lilleoru community has a cultural/spiritual dominant. Among more prominent similar ecological communities are Damanhur in northern Italy and Auroville in south-eastern India. All three are spiritual communities and the ecological aspect is secondary. All three represent a cross-religious and holistic approach and carry the idea of universal spirituality. All three have a spiritual leader and see reaching unity with the world through learning to know and reign oneself as the goal of human life. All the centres are open to visitors and members must mainly contribute their good will, time and skills.

Both Damanhur and Auroville are much older (established respectively in 1977 and in 1968) and bigger (respectively 500 and 1800 members) than Lilleoru and thus also have more fixed social and economic systems. As necessary food and textiles are produced in the villages, and both communities are rather independent of outside resources. Both have a local newspaper, a schooling system and a science park. The way these communities have developed can be seen as a potential glimpse into Lilleoru’s future. All the communities share a vision of a better way of living, but Auroville and Damanhur are making more bold statements than Lilleoru – fusing Eastern and Western experiences and worldviews, they see themselves as laboratories of the future of mankind. Several Lilleoru community members found that this could also be said about Lilleoru:

Aradhana: Activities and nature are the same. In these places things are investigated, which otherwise generally are neglected. It is a unfamiliar territory that is seldom explored.

Still they stress that according to the understanding of Lilleorians it is more pertinent to change oneself before changing others or the entire world. Change yourself and the world changes, as they say.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

There is no concrete programmatic verbalised plan from which the Lilleoru community proceeds. There are collectively set long-term goals, but there is no fixed program according to which everything is ordered. Priorities are flexible and depend largely on necessity and present situation.

Being an ecovillage is not seen as a goal in itself, but a result of a conscious lifestyle. Also the (re)creation of a village community is not a goal in itself, as I had hypothesised at the beginning, but has to do with the phenomenon of the Lilleoru community for its members – the teaching and the teacher and the place where it is easier to be a human being. So from one point of view the raison d’être of Lilleoru community is a human being, teacher Ishwarananda, as a practitioner of a yogic lifestyle and an example of the possibility to change oneself using such techniques. From the other point of view it is the growth of awareness in reflexivity about oneself, about guiding one’s inner processes (emotions, thoughts, habits) and as a result the ability to stay in yourself (the fifth body). So, as trivial as it may at first seem, the phenomenon of Lilleoru can be seen as the “self”. But as the meaning of the “self” in Lilleoru differs greatly from the common meaning, the phenomenon becomes rather exceptional.
How Lilleoru functions as a community (emic view):

- Core – spiritual aspects (the primary cause of the beginning of the community).
- Social aspects – helping and supporting the process of learning, differentiation.
- Material aspects – facilitating the two former processes.

Why is the teacher so important? He is perceived as somebody who has reached mastery over his inner processes and is constantly himself. All the others who go to Lilleoru on a regular basis or live there have seen this as a value toward which they want to strive. Therefore, unlike the common practice in sects with a charismatic leader, in Lilleoru the teacher is not seen as a specially chosen one (personality cult is rather seen as an obstacle than a way to growing awareness), but as an ordinary person, who has learned to master his awareness, learned to know the workings of his inner world and reached the ability to remain identified with his inner self. This is something that everybody is seen to be able to do when they start practising consistently. The teacher has gone through this process already and can thus give valuable advice to facilitate the process. This is the primary source of respect towards him.

The case of Lilleoru shows that the importance of localisation hasn’t decreased in spite of globalisation. Alternative communities (e.g. ecovillages) also function as centres of innovation – through being different, they make explicit the distinction between one’s own and the alien, bring forth the border between them, thus creating the effect of defamiliarisation and enabling the possible alternatives for different levels of life to be seen more clearly. Using Yuri Lotman’s model of the semiosphere (1999) it might thus be concluded that if a phenomenon in culture is vigorous enough to persist, it is likely at one point to become popular and move from a marginal position (periphery) in society to the centre.

NOTES

1 Six months from November 2008 – May 2009. This relatively long period is grounded on the volition to better comprehend the raison d’être of this community. As H. F. Wolcott wrote about fieldwork: “We cannot hurry the lives of those about us, only our own” (2001: 85).

2 From February to March 2009 I conducted 8 qualitative semi-structured interviews with community members. Aliases (Hindu names) are used in the article to protect the interviewees’ privacy: Ishwarananda (male, 1962, 17 years in Lilleoru); Tara (female, 1956, 17 years in Lilleoru), Aradhana (female, 1975, 17 years in Lilleoru), Kashturi (female, 1968, 10 years in Lilleoru), Kripa Ram (male, 1954, 8 years in Lilleoru); Anjani (female, 1974, 5 years in Lilleoru), Radha (female, 1978, 4 years in Lilleoru), Nandi Devar (male, 1965, 3 years in Lilleoru). The sample is compiled so that the set of members involved would be as many-sided as possible: original members as well as newcomers, men and women, simple participants, board members, as well as unorganised members and people living and not (yet) living in Lilleoru.

3 Types of yoga of consciousness, practise of which include meditation, concentration and other inner excercises, but not hatha yoga.

4 The name Lilleoru means “a valley of flowers” in Estonian. The name was given at the beginning of the Soviet period (which lasted from 1940–1991), when farmsteads were divided into smaller units. Lilleoru land was one half of the former Mullikmäe farm. Today Lilleoru also owns the other half and thus old Mullikmäe has been renamed Lilleoru.

5 A kriya yoga master, i.e. acharya, living in Canada.
6 The need to learn to orientate oneself in one’s inner space (mentality, emotions, reactions, habits, etc.) is one of the central principles in the worldview of Lilleorians.
7 Chanting mantras, a practice from the lineage of Haidakhand Babaji that takes place twice a day, mornings and evenings.
8 Voluntary work for the good of others with no personal gain. A practice from the lineage of Haidakhand Babaji.
9 This means also following the *ahimsa* (non-violence) principle.
10 See, for example, International Communities.
11 For example, Twin Oaks in Virginia or The Farm in Tennessee, both in the USA.
12 See the websites of these communities (Damanhur, Auroville).

**SOURCES**

Author’s fieldwork notes, November 2008 – May 2009.
Author’s interviews with the members of the Lilleoru Community, February – March 2009.

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DIGITAL CULTURAL HERITAGE – CHALLENGING MUSEUMS, ARCHIVES AND USERS

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ABSTRACT
This article* will analyse the many challenges that creating, storing and using digital heritage has brought to the memory institutions and their professionals. We look at the interrelationship between the potential users of the museum collections, the collections themselves and information and communication technologies as intermediaries to these relations. By analysing survey data, we look at the average Internet user in order to find out who could be the current and future users of the online collections. In addition that, we analyse interviews conducted with 12 members of different Estonian memory institutions in order to understand their perspective on online cultural heritage. Third empirical pillar of the article comes from the two focus group interviews to understand what are users perceived needs for the digital cultural heritage. The data will be analysed through three key functions of the memory institutions in order to understand how digitisation helps with preservation, opening access to the collections and inviting audiences to become active participants and increasing their involvement with cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS: Internet users • digital heritage • cultural heritage online • memory institutions • heritage professionals

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INTRODUCTION

Several studies claim that today’s museums think too little about who the users of their online sites are, why the users go to these sites and how museums could better adapt the sites to their needs (Farber, Radensky 2008; Roberto 2008; Salgado 2008; Samis 2008). At the same time, there is a strong consensus that online space is very important in providing the pre- and post museum visit experience (Filippini-Fantoni, Bowen 2007; Fisher, Twiss-Garrity 2007; Durbin 2008). In addition to extending the museum experience online, Estonian museums are facing the task of digitising increasing numbers of artifacts (texts, photos, films, objects, etc.) in order to place them in online digital storage spaces. According to the Estonian Digital Cultural Heritage Strategy (Eesti... 2003) the aim of the memory institutions is to transfer cultural heritage in a uniform way to (almost) everyone, widen and expand the user groups and introduce Estonian cultural heritage outside the state borders and language space. As we learn from the Estonian perspective, cultural heritage is defined by state apparatuses and official institutions, by administrators and cultural engineers, whose task is to reproduce national culture and promote the identification of citizens with that culture. In most of the cases this is done in line with Bendix (2000: 38) who says that heritage can be distinguished from other ways of aligning the past with the present by, “its capacity to hide the complexities of history and politics”.

Museums are facing many challenges connected with digitising their materials. In many ways, these challenges correspond to those that museums have faced for centuries. The focus is on the interrelationship between the users and the museums’ collections; modern technologies are only one possible intermediary for these relationships. The classical roles of the museum are collecting, preserving, research and basic interpretation. In general, museums, especially if they are publicly funded, are seen as being obliged to give things back to society in order to “justify their existence”, and according to Fleming (2007), this could be seen as the social responsibility of the museum. For Fleming, this responsibility is met when staff commit themselves to identifying and meeting the needs of the public, and when they place this at the head of their priorities (ibid.). Digitisation and making cultural heritage materials available online as subscribed to by the Estonian Digital Cultural Heritage Strategy (Eesti... 2003) could be seen as one possible way of taking care of those responsibilities. In a country where public services are increasingly provided in online environments, museums face similar pressures from users and administrators.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This article aims to gather several data sets in order to understand the dynamics that exist between employees of the cultural institutions as providers of digital content, and youth groups as potential target audiences. The article starts by questioning the notion that there is an average Internet user through survey data. By identifying and drawing on six Internet user types, we continue to compare the insights from statistical analysis to materials from qualitative interviews. In 2008 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted in four memory institutions in Tartu1 (the second biggest city in Estonia) with
the aim of opening a discussion about digitising and communicating cultural heritage. In addition, two focus group interviews were conducted with young people (one with secondary school pupils and another with university students and young researchers) in order to find out how they would like to use cultural heritage.

For the memory institutions the digitisation of cultural heritage materials is seen to fulfil three basic needs relating to memory institutions: it serves as an aid to preservation; as way of opening access to wider publics; and as a way of inviting audiences to become active participants in introducing, learning and being involved with cultural heritage, either through the given interpretations or by inviting the community to give their own meanings to the cultural heritage materials stored in the museums. At the same time for young audiences, cultural heritage in general is seen as necessary for understanding both the past and also collective memory, mainly in the context of research projects and school papers. The role of memory institutions is seen as the systematic safe keeping of heritage for future generations, and thus is in line with the first two aims of the memory institutions’ digitisation projects, although much less in accordance with the participatory focus.

Figure 1 gives an overview of the research design. We start by analysing Internet use, as in many ways how the Internet is used reflects how the Internet is conceptualised. We then use statistical analysis of the general population as a backdrop for more focused study of heritage professional’s Internet use. In this way museum workers’ basic Internet use is reflected in how they provide cultural heritage for the general population, and vice versa. As young people are generally seen as the key target group for online heritage, mainly because they are future users, online tools are seen as a way to foster interest in heritage among them. Thus we look at how the practices of Internet use differ between the key groups.

Figure 1. Overview of the research design.
We will also look at the three key aims that memory institution have set as targets in the digitising of their collections. Online access and digital collections are supposed to help with preservation, open access and fostering participation and so the article also analyses how well these aims are met. The article concludes with some general considerations drawn from the discussion section.

THE AVERAGE INTERNET USER AND THE MUSEUM

As many authors have analysed, it is very important to understand the Internet user within the museum context, as the online representations of a museum gives a very important pre- and post-museum visit experience (Filippini-Fantoni, Bowen 2007; Fisher, Twiss-Garrity 2007; Durbin 2008). In order to give an empirical description of the “average” Internet user, we use data from the University of Tartu survey Mina. Maailm. Meedia (Me. The World. The Media). The survey was conducted in cooperation with a survey company and composed by a research team from the University of Tartu. The representative sample consisted of 1,507 people aged between 15 and 74 and it enables us to describe inhabitants of Estonia based on their Internet use practices and to have some insight into their attitudes towards digital culture and content creation. Through cluster analysis, we have reached six basic Internet user types who are similar to those described in our previous studies (Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2004; Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2006; Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Reinsalu 2009). The types have remained fairly stable (Kalmus, Keller, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2009), thus enabling us to make assumptions on future Internet use as well.

In general, the types can be divided into two broader types, each of which has three subtypes. On the one hand, more active Internet users (varied use, practical and pragmatic information-based use, entertainment and communication-oriented use) and, on the other hand, three types of more passive internet users. These types include users oriented towards information and entertainment as well as infrequent users who come into contact with the Internet so rarely that it is impossible to distinguish clearly developed practices of use. Figure 2 provides an overview of the online activities of the user types, comparing their frequency of engagement in the most popular activities and activities related to digital culture. It also gives a comparison of Internet users according to the nine most distinguishing Internet user practices. Respondents rated on a scale of 1–7 how important this activity was for them. On average, the responses ranged from 2–4, depending on the activity. In the figure, one can see the variation from the average, marking how much this particular activity was considered more/less important than the average response.
Figure 2. Nine online activities distinguished by Internet users types (numbers indicate deviation from the mean scores of the average users).

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- Using online banking
- Communicating with friends
- Seeking practical information
- Seeking work and study related information
- State provided e-services
- Seeking entertainment (games, movies, music)
- Following online journalism and news portals
- Seeking information to improve your private life
- Using online databases (libraries etc.)

**Active, versatile Internet users** (14 per cent of all Internet users) are more active with regard to all manner of Internet use compared to the other groups. For them, the Internet is an environment where they satisfy their need for information, entertainment, belonging and participation (Figure 2). This type includes a greater proportion of women, people aged 20–39, and people with a higher education. Together with the next Internet user type, they are actively contributing online content. Uploading photos is the most common activity where content is provided in the online environment and social networking sites come second in online content creation practices.

**Entertainment oriented active Internet users** (20 per cent) concentrate mainly on searching for entertainment, watching/listening to TV and radio shows through the Internet, and also on the consumption of culture. This type of user is generally active, however, and tends to search for information and use the Internet to gain access to practical services if necessary. This user type includes people who consider it important to participate in blogs and forums. The largest number of Internet users of this type belongs among the 15–29 age group, with the Russian-speaking population being represented slightly more among the entertainment-oriented active users. This group is most active when it comes to different forms of content creation. They upload photos and videos, and participate in forums and social networking sites.

**Practical work related Internet users** (22 per cent) focus primarily on information and practical activities, in addition to being significantly more active than average in using e-services. Their online communication is mainly work related and considerably less personal than that of the average Internet user. They also search for significantly less entertainment than the average Internet user. This group is dominated by women, people aged 30–49, people with a higher education and members of the Estonian-speaking population. In addition, people belonging to this group are more likely to have an average or high income.

The largest group among the passive Internet users is the **practical information oriented infrequent Internet users** (20 per cent). Their Internet use is characterised by a somewhat higher than average use of information and slightly higher than average use of online banking solutions. At the same time, the variety of their online activities is somewhat larger than that of the next user type. This group more commonly includes older people, women and people with a secondary education.

The online activities of **entertainment and communication oriented infrequent Internet users** (15 per cent) are characterised by searching for entertainment as well as communication with friends and acquaintances, while their Internet use remains passive with regard to other purposes. This group includes more men, members of younger age groups and therefore also people with a basic education and those belonging to the lowest income group.

**Small-scale Internet users** (10 per cent) are not characterised by any specific practice of Internet use and their online behaviour is generally in the developmental stage. Infrequent users comprise a larger than average share of older people and people with a secondary education, as well as members of the Russian-speaking population. They also are the least active when it comes to contributing online content.

Figure 3 relates these Internet user types to their attitudes towards going to a museum. In general, it illustrates the idea that the more active people are in their attitudes towards life, the more frequent Internet users they are as well. Although one might as-
sume that if a person holds traditional values and a conservative attitude, they would rather go to a museum and not use the Internet that much, the research illustrates that this assumption doesn’t hold true. The more active Internet users are, the higher is the chance that they will also be more likely to go to the museums.

Figure 3. Percentage of Internet users and non-users who like, or like very much, visiting museums.

When compared with young people, museum and archive workers tend to belong to the practical work oriented groups. Some of them can be classified as active Internet users, while others are more infrequent. Overall, their use is very much oriented towards getting things needed for work done and much less towards entertainment related or leisure use.

For employees of memory institutions, their everyday work and most of their day is spent at a computer and on the Internet. A museum employee’s day often starts with reviewing and answering e-mails, and a large part of their professional communication takes place via e-mail and internal websites, which have made the sharing of information easier. E-mails have made communication and exchange of information more active and operative in Estonia and abroad. At the same time it is stressed that direct communication is still important in the functioning of an organisation and plays a significant role in developing further web-based communication outside the institution.

By and large, I get all the information I need for work [from the Internet], although we do have department meetings, but I also get the information I should know [from the Internet]. [...] On the internal web I can express my opinion and communicate with colleagues, that probably joins it all up and enables me to promptly use information and everyone to look at one and the same thing, increases and enhances the quality of work. But I still think that we also need these joint meetings. (ENM)³

First of all, the Internet is used for finding work-related information. The homepages of the Ministry of Culture, Tartu City and museums are used most often to find necessary information, contacts and documents. Database search systems are important in everyday work; depending on the nature of the work, the databases of the Institute of the Estonian Language, the Estonian Literary Museum and the National Archives of Estonia are used, as well as the library catalogue ESTER, the Amazon bookstore and various dictionaries. People mainly stay in the Estonian-based Internet space, venturing into foreign language web-space seldom and then rather out of interest than everyday need. Finding and reading important speciality articles in Internet databases has become important for people who are proficient in the English language.

The Internet allows people to be up to date with the activities of memory institutions around the world. Employees often visit the homepages of professional unions (e.g. ICOM) or museums and archives in Finland, Sweden, Denmark and America, being most interested in novel solutions and gaining inspiration for professional activities. The interviewees hold in high regard databases of professional importance, which enable the necessary information to be found without entering the research hall or library. As a significant factor in using the databases, the interviewees mentioned user friendliness, which for them means the simplicity of navigation in the search system and the speed of finding the required information. If the search system of a database is too complicated or the sought information is not found, the database is not used again.

Outside working hours, the interviewees primarily use the Internet to find infor-
information. The Internet provides help finding cultural events and weather forecasts and assists in making travel plans; people also use it to read the news, use banking services and the electronic school portal for checking children’s progress in school. A common opinion is that making big purchases has become easier via the Internet. Internet portals are the main source of assistance in buying a car or property and making price comparisons.

Besides the use of e-services, finding hobby related information is important for museum employees. People follow thematic blogs and homepages where they read the news and look for answers to specific questions. The Internet is not considered an important place for personal communication or entertainment. Work related communication has moved to the Internet and therefore people tend to prefer direct communication outside working hours.

For very many people, everyday life has moved to the Internet. For me, it has not moved to the Internet – some parts have, and I cannot say when it should happen that my everyday life will move to the Internet. (ENM)

As the employees of memory institutions generally fall into the categories of practical information oriented Internet users, both more active and infrequent, we asked them who they considered to be “ordinary Internet users”. The answer was a vague description of “ordinary” in which the users referred to younger people who use the Internet more actively and largely for entertainment. The interviewees thought that young people use the Internet for communication, sharing information and photos with friends, writing blogs and homepages, writing comments and watching films. The “ordinary” users’ skills in finding necessary information on the Internet are better and they can also manage more complicated databases or search systems.

In our focus group interviews, the respondents could belong to the versatile active Internet users, entertainment oriented Internet users or in some cases, for more mature students, to the category of work oriented Internet users. Most focus group members are in the active Internet user category. On one hand, the Internet is used for practical needs such as research or information searches, and on the other hand entertainment files such as films and music are downloaded, and the Internet is used as a social networking environment.

Orkut, YouTube and MSN – it’s like a trio. And if I need to do a search, I use Google, not Yahoo, because I like Google more. And because I have the neti.ee portal as my browser start page, I often find myself on that site. (1M)

Every day… Google and MSN, life is unthinkable without them. And of course, like anyone. [...] Information search, entertainment, looking for applications to download from time to time… (2F)

And I use the Internet, too, like anyone else: to read e-mail and to look for all sorts of things and for watching all kinds of movies [...]. Oh, yeah, I keep a blog, too. For the reason that I want to see what it is, what it’s all about. (2F)

Active users greeted technological innovations with great interest and tried them out to see if they were compatible with their user preferences. Databases or web portals from which it was complicated to find interesting material were usually discarded after
an initial, disappointing, experience. Thus the process of finding information must be compatible with the user’s existing browsing logic and user experience. Another aspect that is considered unsuitable with regard to use of a portal is if it is too time consuming to distinguish relevant information from irrelevant information, or if the pages are overloaded with banners and animated adverts.

It may also be that some sites are really visually “busy” and you practically can’t understand where the things are listed. If there are many, many ads, or if [...] the information could be summarised much more concisely but it is all spread out. (1M)

In comparing the qualitative data to the quantitative, we can say that almost 40 per cent of the general population of Internet users fall into the category of work related users. When considering that, for them the Internet is used for qualities that are mainly relevant for their work, we can see a gap forming. Browsing museum websites or searching databases for heritage information is work for very few people, thus making the key target groups for museum websites those who belong among the versatile active Internet users and entertainment related users. Most of the museum and archive’s websites and heritage databases are designed by people whose primary use is work related, while at the same time the primary target group uses Internet for leisure and fun. This generates a situation in which there is a potential gap between the understanding and conceptualisation of the Internet, and this might in turn lead to a usability gap. The three key uses that heritage institutions outline, and for which the websites and online databases are designed, will be investigated in the next sections of this article.

PRESERVATION AND PUBLICATION OF COLLECTIONS ONLINE

We presume that museums and their collections exist for their users and visitors. Museums have defined the needs of the public in the traditional context, and within known environments such as exhibitions, etc. However, in addition museums should think in the same way about visitors to their online environments. Many studies have indicated that museums do not try to understand database users when creating online databases about museum collections (Farber, Radensky 2008; Roberto 2008; Salgado 2008; Samis 2008). Very often the basic idea of the database is to create the web-based museum objects gallery. Similarly, Estonian museums and archives see the creation of improved preservation possibilities and the reduction of the damage caused by usage as the foremost objective of digitisation. The practice of digitisation has so far been focussed primarily on materials most used by researchers. Thus, one can see that in these cases, digitisation is very much a user driven activity. This kind of digitisation practice has enabled the National Archives of Estonia to claim that 90 per cent of their most-used sources are available online. In addition, contract work materials are digitised on an ongoing basis for exhibitions and publications. Materials that the users have not yet discovered in a collection or not shown interest in are not a priority for digitisation, primarily due to the lack of the financial and time resources necessary for the process. Memory institutions also have fewer resources to focus on what Roberto (2008) and Samis (2008) have stressed as vital: that museum objects in the “web of data” should not only be information sources, but also offer interpretation.
I think that much currently depends on financial possibilities. There are ideas and thoughts, and another thing is that people should cooperate in respect of financial possibilities. And cooperation between institutions inevitably takes time. (ELM)

However, this kind of practice leads to an unsystematic and often project-based digitisation process. More often than not, the interviews indicated that digitisation is first and foremost seen as a technical process of generating digital files from documents, and much less attention is paid at the information architecture, interpretations and systematisation of these works. As a first step many memory institutions in Estonia have introduced a web-based ordering and delivery system, which requires a precise order from the client. This potentially makes user interaction with the collections easier, but also challenges them to have greater pre-knowledge of these collections.

So far, all the cultural heritage digitisation strategies have remained on paper and the lack of real cooperation between major institutions has also not enhanced uniform development. Various institutions have created several different databases from similar material, although these do not form an integral whole or make finding information from a single access point easier for users.

Between archives, we have already learnt that users are not interested whether the thing they are looking for is in the state archives, history archives, film archives – users are interested in using the information. (NAE)

Similarly, a shortcoming cited by focus group members, relating to orientation within memory institution databases, is the lack of a single unified system and the complexity of finding databases. In practice, finding and using many museum or archive databases requires guidance from a teacher or advisor because memory institutions lack visibility in search engine results.

I was a senior year student in upper secondary school when ERNI was introduced and it wasn’t really a finished product. My literature teacher demonstrated it. For me it was interesting but it was completely different and these were texts that I would not otherwise have read or viewed and it was very interesting. For me, it was a real eye-opener and in some sense I have been using these texts to this day. (2F)

This indicates that proper guidance to online databases can be inspiring for the user, but only a few focus group members have continued to use the databases they found. The use of the databases is made more difficult above all by a lack of knowledge about the content they offer, which makes it difficult to perform a search; moreover, the data structure is too complicated for consistent use.

In the web-based presentation of their collections, experts have so far given low importance to the desire to increase the openness and recognition of memory institutions, and therefore increase the number of users. Facilitating access to collections through web publication can be considered the second objective of digitisation. The superiority of the original artifact is still considered more important than the interpretations and value generated with the help of its digital representations.

Users will definitely be glad if they can see it [data on the Internet]. Because users are very lazy... We would, of course, like to see users checking out those things on the web and having access, but also coming here. I can understand users – archives
are open on workdays and in working hours, and likewise all archives. One has to be retired, on childcare leave or unemployed to be able to go and study archive materials and original documents. (ELM)

In many ways, museum and archive workers in Estonia still portray the object-centred-ness of the Victorian museum where viewing the glass caskets was more relevant than the experiences and relationships with the museum user and the artifacts. This is also reflected in the view that online databases are only incentives for the user to find their way to the original artifacts stored in the museum or archive.

**WIDENING ACCESS THROUGH ESTABLISHED, AND POTENTIAL NEW DATABASES**

Depending on the topic of an exhibition the expectations of various target groups, and the relevant context, are taken into account and the ideal viewer of visitor envisaged quite clearly. The same can’t be said of the online exhibitions or databases.

One objective of the databases so far created in the National Archives of Estonia has been to improve the availability of collections to hobbyists in addition to researchers.

[T]he physical research hall in this building has approximately 20 workplaces and 40–50 people pass through there every day. Sometimes less and sometimes more. Now we have opened a virtual research hall and I think we will have about sixty users early in the morning [...] and at the best times we will have over 500 users simultaneously from all over the world. Archive using possibilities have increased tremendously. (NAE)

Database search systems and the presentation of materials depend on the system of collection, while the meta-data added to this information is selected based on the needs of the database “ordinary user”. In the context of databases, the term ‘ordinary user’ first of all means researchers of various levels and target groups with specific interests – teachers, students, the media and museum workers. The common assumption is that from the start these users are highly knowledgeable, motivated and interested in museums and studying cultural heritage via the web: if a museum loads something up, these users will come anyway.

Feedback from database users has so far been completely neglected and in the few instances some comments have been made, they are in general positive. This has given grounds to presume that the databases are user-friendly and that finding the necessary information is easy. There is no information about various user groups, and the following is a rather common answer:

But we haven’t received much feedback on who is the ordinary user of databases. It is clear that the media uses it, various portals, teachers – from them, we have received feedback – when they are asking whether they can use it or telling us that they found this or that fault and could we please fix it. (ELM)

Cultural heritage institution professionals see that the web environment could bring people with no research or museum interest to museums, particularly the younger age groups. Digitised collections and search systems enable museums to attract interest and
bring in wider user groups to view original materials and artifacts. Similarly, the participants in the two focus groups assumed that good and user-friendly databases would help bring them closer to the museums’ activities. Users were asked to describe ideal web portals that would draw them to museums, and five principles can be summarised from their discussions.

1. A memory institution must have a presence on the Web along with all of its content, as often it is not possible for users to visit the institution. Here the indication is that, although professionals would like to see online collections as leading to the physical museum or archive experience, the youth focus group participants see this as a less important factor. Museum professionals do not believe that users will completely lose interest in viewing originals because of digitisation. They are confident that no virtual exhibition or database can replace a three dimensional original copy or an old photograph, film or document. A digital database is seen as first of all an incentive to interest the user and spark the desire to see the original. At the same time the experts admit that many users will probably not make it any further than the databases. However, for the participants in the youth focus groups, museum databases should be able to sustain online representations on their own.

2. A database must contain an introduction to its structure and data, and contain abundant illustrations, video material and interviews. When digitising materials, museums often focus on one type of material at a time – for instance, all glass negatives (daguerreotypes) all maps, etc., while users would much rather have materials that are interlinked through a story. Here the digital museum can almost be described as undergoing a rebirth, in a fairly similar way to that in which the Victorian museum as a storage space of objects was reborn though Neurath’s revolution in early 20th century (Henning 2006).

3. The data (i.e. list of sources, digitised sources) must also include interpretations, context and background information that would help create associations and create a whole, as well as containing links/references to other related databases. While in the museum context professionals see digitisation as an aim of its own, and want to have the objects tell their own stories, young users are much more interested in having that work done for them through the provision of materials that are already interlinked and have interpretations provided.

4. Multifaceted information should be structured pursuant to user profiles so that it is possible to distinguish between information that is relevant for researchers, and that which is relevant for users who simply wish to find interesting information, and so avoid information “noise”.

Here the young focus group participants indicate a clear understanding of the differences between potential digital heritage material audiences. The possibility of differing user levels is somewhat distant from the heritage professional’s view, in which all database users are perceived as professionals and equally interested and knowledgeable in all aspects. In our focus groups, two different potential audiences – secondary school pupils, and university students and young researchers – acknowledged that interests in different subject matters vary, and therefore the differentiation of user profiles seems like a good (albeit time- and resource-intensive) solution.
5. Various cultural heritage databases should be consolidated in one environment and the structure should be unified.

The super-database of all Estonian cultural heritage materials seems to be a common wish for all – the bureaucrats who drafted the Estonian Digital Cultural Heritage Strategy, museum workers and potential users. However, today the lack of resources, strategic planning or a conceptualised understanding of public and museum needs stands in a way of this dream coming true.

**ENGAGING USERS IN THE CREATION OF COLLECTIONS**

The third objective of digitisation is to engage users in the collection of digital materials and the creation of cultural heritage via the web. Henning (2006: 130) sees that the Internet in its database-like structure would enable museums to re-enact the Foucauldian dream of the return of curiosity, and thus the age of curiosity cabinets from the history of museums. Yet in many ways despite the opening up, and participatory proclamations, of Estonian digitisation policies, in reality the digitisation of materials is ultimately focused on keeping the “Victorian era glass caskets”, even though they are now in the digital form. Cultural institutions are still seeking solutions for participatory engagement that would satisfy all the parties. Although the most natural thing in Estonian digital space is online commentaries, and users are familiar with seeing them in variety of forms and environments, there is still a distinct disinterest in participating in the museum’s activities. This is by no means helped by the fact that museums are looking for a quality of material that, for the professional, is not always reflected in those hastily scribbled remarks of the online commentary tradition. The high standards and strict rules applied to items normally worthy of museums’ attention raises the entry requirements for participatory projects in some cases to unreachable levels.

At one point we were having a whole lot of trouble with it; because spam robots discovered it and we had 300 comments along the lines of “see beautiful girls here”. Then we solved it by restricting comments from abroad. [...] But we did create the option, hoping that people will write down their customs. But we need to think about how to change it. Because back then it wasn’t so common to comment on every article, saying that it is stupid. Today, this is much more common. (ELM)

Saldago (2008) and Farber and Radensky (2008) have shown in their studies that users are more prepared to interact with museums in the context of new technologies and web databases, but only if the systems are user friendly. So the most important factor in creating web databases are the understanding of the users needs and their potential motivations in using materials. It is also important to trust users and the public in creating new cultural heritage, and to help them establish an environment for communication. However, as Durbin (2008) has shown in her paper about Web 2.0, that modern online possibilities should not be viewed as not being technological or experimental, rather they should be seen as tasking museums to interact in new ways with the public.

Figure 4 gives an overview of how familiar Estonian Internet users are with contributing content online. Two thirds of the most active online participants – versatile and active entertainment oriented users who we have referred to as the key target groups
for the museum – have uploaded photos to the Internet. This indicates that there is at least some willingness and habit to provide content in the online environment. At the same time, in the more passive groups, one can see that almost all content creation practices have been tried out by less than 10 per cent of the group. In many ways, this can generate dilemmas for museums. Those who are more familiar with participating in the online environments may be seen as not so “serious” in their Internet use and thus also the content they contribute may be more entertainment related.

All the professionals interviewed understand that it is of no use for a museum if users collect materials on their own, yet have no option to add them to the museum’s collection. The creation of these possibilities requires changes to be made in the work organisation of institutions as well as separate management of materials and communication with users. At the same time, professionals expect that when users add materials to web-based databases, they must act in a way that is compatible with the institution’s collection systems, i.e. be knowledgeable of cataloguing and meta-data information. Nevertheless, experts find that the collection of digital material has helped them to better understand users’ needs and to observe and understand their activity patterns in the Internet environment. In many cases, the interviewees thought that users have not yet developed the habit of contributing to memory institutions, and that at the moment electronic contributions have become less personal than information received in the conventional written form.

Well, when we were collecting school heritage, it differed from 1992 most of all by the fact that [at that time] there was an option to reply electronically. [...] People
could get questionnaires both by e-mail and from the computer. But the material we received on paper was more properly and purposefully prepared, because anything can happen on the Net. [...] People write a little bit and anonymously, but there is no anonymity on paper. [...] if it is organised and assisted by teachers – you can’t always check that with computers. (ELM)

These contradicting results indicate that although there is a willingness and need to listen to the user as a source of modern heritage material, at the same time “ordinary people” have a perceived distinct lack of the skill necessary to participate in museum activities. At the same time, some members of the general population have enough practice creating online content that, should there be incentives from the memory institutions to provide content, they might be able to do so. However, content creation practices are not overly popular and in cases where people might be interested in participating in a museum or archive’s activities, they might not have the necessary skills. And if the “quality” threshold set by the museums is very high this only increases the skills barrier even more.

CONCLUSIONS

The key gap between heritage websites and their uses potentially stems from the different user practices of heritage professionals and their target audiences. When people for whom heritage is mainly related to their professional activities – with all their long-standing professional practices – start designing online databases and websites for youngsters whose “holy-trinity of the Internet” are formed by MSN, Orkut and YouTube, then there is a strong potential for miscommunication. In order to make web environments that are usable, the key is to understand the user’s motivation for wanting access to digital heritage materials.

Every memory institutions sees its main role as storing and preserving its collections. Digitisation is one way of maintaining the ideal storage conditions for the museum or archive objects by making use of their digital copies, thus enabling the storage of the original. At the same time, all over the world, the user of the museum has been increasingly in focus and museums are becoming more and more user-centred instead of being centred on their collections. Creating and interpreting cultural heritage has been distanced from the experts and curators, and rather the community whose cultural heritage is at stake is seen as the main interpreter. However, the community does not always grasp this role. In our discussion with cultural heritage institutions’ professionals and members of young audiences, who are foreseen as the key target groups for digital collections, it transpired that audience members are keen on searching through and looking at heritage materials, preferably across various collections, but they would rather have the interpretations with the material. While the technological opportunities, whether Web 2.0 or another platform, are more and more readily available, the role of the user is as fuzzy for the Estonian museum and archive employees as it is for young members of potential audiences. It is often felt that we first have to sort out the data – digitise, organise, make available – and only then can we look at the interpretations.

The key focus of the interviews, both for professionals and users, was centred around making digitised materials available to users. This inevitably boils down to the question...
of maximally effective information architecture. With increasing amounts of information available online, both users and producers of online materials feel that the searchability, clarity and variety of information is vital. However, in many cases, museum and archive professionals feel that users should master the traditional practices of cataloguing and key-wording the artifacts rather than having the museums and archives adapt those to new conditions. Although no one assumes that cultural heritage must compete with social networking sites or YouTube, one should face the fact that memory institutions are seen as aspects of the entertainment sector and that young people today are first and foremost familiar with the aforementioned online environments. This poses a challenge for the memory institutions to grasp the possibilities offered by those online spaces, while still maintaining the traditional values and conceptions necessary for their professional identities. Many museum and archive experts feel that as existing cataloguing systems and database structures have worked for museums for nearly a hundred years, they should continue to do so. Others understand the challenge of opening museums up and the need to adapt to less experienced users’ knowledge.

Despite the fact that traditionally the logic of different memory institutions differs – museums see their role as more focused on interpretations, while the primary focus of archives is one of storage and availability – users of heritage materials online do not care so much about the institutions’ backgrounds. For them, the key concern is the availability of the materials and assistance that professionals can provide in interpreting these materials.

In conclusion, we can say that in many ways, the online spaces and databases of the museums and archives provide a multitude of challenges. The first role of digital cultural heritage is to aid the storage of artifacts and to save them for the future. At the same time, institutions are not that interested in updating their own cataloguing or meta-data processes and thus may miss out on the opportunity to increase the usability of the materials once they have been digitised. Thus digital collections may remain as unused and untouched as the originals in the vaults. Secondly, although the need for relevant and easy-to-use online spaces is understood, the underlying assumption is still that people need to come to the museum to see the originals, and not just make use of the digital copies. In seeing digital space as merely complementary to the “real” environment, many good opportunities may easily be missed. Thirdly, there is a need for mutual education in order to increase museum and archive participatory possibilities, and therefore to grasp the potentials and opportunities hailed by new technologies. When museums see little value or relevance in user-provided materials, users will not easily learn to provide materials that are of interest for museums. Today, new technologies provide the potential to close the gap between memory institutions and the general population; however, unless there is a considerable change in the way memory institutions think about the audiences of the heritage, this potential may never be realised.

NOTES

1 Four interviews with employees of the Estonian National Museum – referred to as ENM, six with employees of the Estonian Literary Museum – referred to as ELM, one interview with an employee of the Estonian Sports Museum – referred to as ESM and one interview with an employee of the National Archives of Estonia – referred to as NAE.
2 Refered to as 1 for the pupil’s focus group and 2 for the students and researcher’s focus group, F or M for the speaker’s gender and numbered for the order around the table.
3 The interviewed experts are quoted with reference to their institution.

SOURCES

Authors’ group interviews with secondary school pupils, university students and young researchers in 2008.
Authors’ interviews with the employees of the Estonian memory institutions in 2008.

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you so much for your invitation to come to Tartu to congratulate you on your centennial. I am especially pleased to come to this event because we have had a lot of good and friendly exchanges in the last years: in 2008 your visit to Berlin-Dahlem to our exhibition, “Discover Europe!” (Tietmeyer 2008); and it is a long time since 1964 when your colleague Aleksei Peterson made a presentation at our own 75th birthday celebration of a report about the methods of collecting ethnographic objects in Estonia between 1958 to 1963 (Peterson 1964). In addition, we often think about our friendly collaboration with Kaalu Kirme. He worked with us very intensively on the bijouterie in our old Estonian collection (Kirme 2004). And one of the highlights in the last years, our annual cultural days, was dedicated to Estonian “Images – Objects – Melodies” and linked to the Estonian days at the Museum for European Cultures 2004. Organised by my colleagues Elisabeth Tietmeyer and Candy Sauer in cooperation with the Estonian Institute in Tallinn, the Embassy of Estonia in Berlin, the German-Estonian Society and last but not least your museum in Tartu (Tietmeyer 2007). It was combined with the very impressive exhibition of photographs taken by photographer Johannes Pääsuke (1892–1918)1 at the beginning of the 20th century (cf. Reidla 2003).

The Museum of European Cultures was founded as a meeting point of intercultural dialogues in 1999 under the auspices of the Foundation of Prussian Cultural Heritage at the National Museum in Berlin. It was the result of merging the former Museum of German Folklore with the European collections of the Ethnological Museum (Karasek, Tietmeyer 1999).

The general profile of the Museum of Ethnology, founded in 1873, was to concern itself with the cultures of all regions outside Europe, even though up until 1999 it also held the European collection mentioned above, which consisted of about 40,000 ethnographic objects mainly from the rural populations of different countries. However, this collection existed in the shadows; it was never shown in a permanent exhibition as other non-European collections were. The Museum of German Folklore, founded in 1889, was dedicated to the cultural history of the middle and lower classes in Germany and in other German-speaking areas. Most of the 230,000 ethnographic objects were produced and used in the 19th century.

One of the reasons for the merging of the two collections in 1999 was to abolish the Folklore Museum’s self-chosen exclusive concentration on German national culture and to “Europeanise” the scientific scope. As Europe became more united, it was no longer appropriate to have two institutions, one with an almost exclusive German ethnographic collection, the other with an analogous collection from the rest of Europe, located in a museum which exclusively concentrated on non-European cultures.

The Museum of European Cultures’ basic philosophy is to focus on cultural similari-
ties and differences in Europe by explaining the interweaving of cultural patterns on the one hand, and by defining group identities on the other, as well as by a tracing of the history of European cultural phenomena. The theoretical basis for this is the scientific differentiation of the term culture (Kultur).

This is not the definition of culture as art, music or literature that is generally accepted in Germany. It refers to cultural expressions, such as cultural domains, symbolic culture, subculture, ethnic culture, regional culture, national culture and supra-national culture. Further, it refers to contacts between cultures and contacts between social strata within Europe. Moreover, relations between Europeans and non-Europeans, and the latter’s interpretation of European cultural phenomena, are also issues for discussion. The Museum of European Cultures’ intention is to present and communicate interpretations of these phenomena. The programmatic name of our museum obviously implies a conscious decision against using the German term European culture in the singular, because from a European viewpoint, this defies definition just as, for example, the term German culture does.

The theme of cultural contacts was almost preordained as a concept for the planned pilot exhibition, especially since Europe provides an extraordinarily good example of the various forms and consequences of centuries-long cultural contacts of varying intensity, both within the continent itself and with non-European peoples.

There are various ways in which people come into contact with other cultures. Personal contact may come through diffusion across a country’s borders, through travel and cultural events, through migration and trade, through missionary work and even through military conflict. In addition, people learn about culture indirectly via a wide range of media such as exhibitions, stories, accounts of travel and research, pictures, films, photographs and the internet. These contacts can unite different groups and help to bring about cultural change, but they can also lead to increased perceptions of difference. A discussion of cultural contacts based on different formulations of the relevant questions implies in its method a cross-cultural comparison. This offers museum visitors the opportunity to get to know unfamiliar aspects of their own (past) culture and, in addition, to recognise cultural connections within Europe. By orienting its content towards this goal, today’s Museum of European Cultures has shaped its own image. It opened to the public in 1999 with an exhibition called “Cultural Contact in Europe: the Fascination of Images”, which lasted some years (Karasek, Tietmeyer 1999). This exhibition was based on the view that the cultures of Europe did not develop independently from each other, exemplified by pictures and images of different kinds.

With cultural contact as its main theme, one of the Museum’s aims is to work closely with people whose cultures are to be presented through activities and exhibitions. Annual so-called cultural days have been initiated, each lasting about two or more weeks. Here, visitors can inform themselves about a specific cultural or historical topic concerning a cultural region or country within Europe. Each event consists of a small exhibition and a framework programme of lectures, discussions, dancing, films, music, regional dishes and arts and crafts offered for sale. So far we have organised the Sami, the Polish, the Venetian, the Tatarian, the Estonian, the Croatian, the Romanian and this year the Sardinian Cultural Days. These events are always the result of co-operation between the Museum of European Cultures and cultural associations, migrant organisations, European embassies in Berlin and/or partner museums in Europe. Most of our exhibitions are the result of bi-lateral cooperation.

The aim of all these activities is to establish the Museum of European Cultures as
an intercultural meeting place. For this reason the Museum actively participated in the EU project “Migration, Work and Identity” financed by the Culture 2000 programme. Migration is the classic form of cultural contact. Up until a few years ago this was a theme not considered important by museums, although it was already a subject for the relevant university disciplines. In particular, museums of history and cultural history concentrated on the presentation of local, regional and national aspects of their country’s culture in their research, collections and exhibitions, whereas museums of ethnology dealt with the cultures of non-European or native peoples. The two Berlin state museums mentioned above are, in fact, good examples of this. Here, ethnologists were and still are concerned with the “other” or with the “stranger”, but not with the “stranger in their midst”. The German folklorists were not concerned in the slightest with the stranger but rather with the self, or to put it another way, with their own past culture. Thus neither of these museums considered itself to be scientifically responsible for migrant cultures.

We had this fact in mind when we developed the thematic concept of the Museum of European Cultures. The regional orientation is towards Europe, still focussing on Germany, since the museum is located there and most of the ethnographic objects are from Germans. But today we ask different questions, for example: What is German? Who belongs to German society and who does not? These are central issues for the Museum of European Cultures, which aims to examine cultural diversity in Europe and the different cultural and social worlds existing within Germany in particular.

Participation in the EU project “Migration, Work and Identity” has provided the Museum with an opportunity to closely examine the subject of Migration in Berlin for the first time. Thus in 2002 we organised a photographic exhibition posing the question “Heimat Berlin?” (Neuland-Kitzerow, Tietmeyer 2002) We commissioned work from eight photographers from different countries, all of whom lived and worked in Berlin. They provided us with their impressions of Berlin as a multicultural city.

The follow-up exhibition in 2004 was called “Migration (Hi)Stories in Berlin”, it exhibited eight objects of exemplary importance and told their stories. Most of the objects were brought to Berlin by migrants and reminded them of their home countries. Other objects were created or made popular in Berlin by migrants and their descendants. In setting up this exhibition we again worked with migrants, their descendants and their organisations.

These exhibitions have been organised in close and productive cooperation with the Neighbourhood Museum, the German Museum of Technology Berlin and Berlin Museums Services. These institutions merged into a Berlin Platform within the framework of the EU project. This platform had as its goal the long-term establishment of the EU project in Berlin. The long-term aim is to attract migrants, their descendants and organisations to visit the museums regularly and to work as active partners.

On this basis we are taking part in the EU project “Entrepreneurial Cultures in European Cities” together with the Amsterdam City Museum and some other social and political institutions in Europe. In our national project we would like to present small businesses or their owners from various cultural backgrounds as examples. The objective will be an analysis of the entire process, from the conception of a business idea right through to the current situation. What exactly is the economic and social function of district or local economies?

Businessmen and -women with migration backgrounds are conversant with at least two cultures and hence regarded as bridge builders between these, particularly owing to their transnational activities in
terms of exploring new markets and developing new marketing strategies. But this attribute can also benefit an urban district’s entire community and social life.

The significance of the binational experience of the main protagonists will be underscored in the process. These main players include clothing, food, travel, and skilled craft retailers; and also cultural entrepreneurs, for example, in the media or music industries. Another focus of the component project will be on the new services available to migrants, such as intercultural health and geriatric care, as well as on innovative product developments and their markets. The research will also focus on any changes initiated in family businesses by subsequent generations. Of central concern in this will be an analysis of the interaction between the countries of origin and residence of migrants under a generational aspect. The project aims to inform the museum’s visitors with a photo exhibition on innovation potentials within ethnic economies by showing various examples, while simultaneously engaging it in a public dialogue with the project’s participants. We further hope that because of our cooperation with migrant entrepreneurs, our house will open up to a new public who will hence be put in a position to discover familiar items within its walls and perhaps even be able to identify with the museum as a location of its very own memories.

There have been a lot of other activities these last 10 years: the working group for European popular printing history, with its meeting in Nürnberg in 2009, previously held in Amsterdam and Ravenna and next year in Modena, in cooperation with partners all over Europe, etc. (Brückner et al. 2009); mobile exhibitions about the European Spring of Nations and their outspreading in the popular culture as a project between Poland, France and Germany (Kuśmidrowicz-Król et al. 2005); exhibitions in the so-called interethnic field in southeast Europe, especially as an exchange between Hungarian (e.g. Balonyi et al. 2006) and Romanian Institutions.

All these projects will be exploited in cooperative partnerships with partners in Germany and other European cities and countries.

With my best wishes for your Anniversary, from Berlin to Tartu. Thank you so much for your passion!

NOTES

1 According to the Julian calendar – 1917.

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*Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* (JEF), the journal of the University of Tartu, the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian Literary Museum, welcomes articles in the research areas of ethnology, folkloristics, museology, cultural and social anthropology. JEF is a peer-reviewed journal, issued two times per year.

**Preparation of Manuscripts.** Contributions may vary widely in length; research articles should generally not exceed 20 pages, shorter pieces might include critical essays, commentaries, discussions and reviews of recent books. Submitted manuscripts should be typewritten in English and sent to the editorial address as an e-mail attachment (Rich Text Format and MS Word is preferred) and in hard copy. Please, keep tables, figures, illustrations and text as separate files.

Submitted research articles will be read by referees. Each paper should include a self-contained abstract in English of a maximum of 150 words, summarizing the article’s main points plus 5 keywords. The first page should contain the name, affiliation and address of each author.

**General Conventions of References.** Endnotes and parenthetical in-text citations in author-date style should be used as follows: (Bynum 1987: 83). A complete list of references cited should be provided at the end of the article as appropriate:


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